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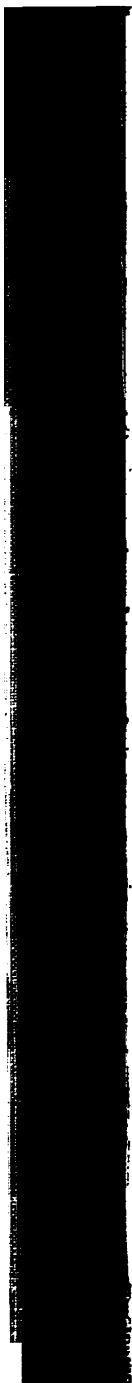
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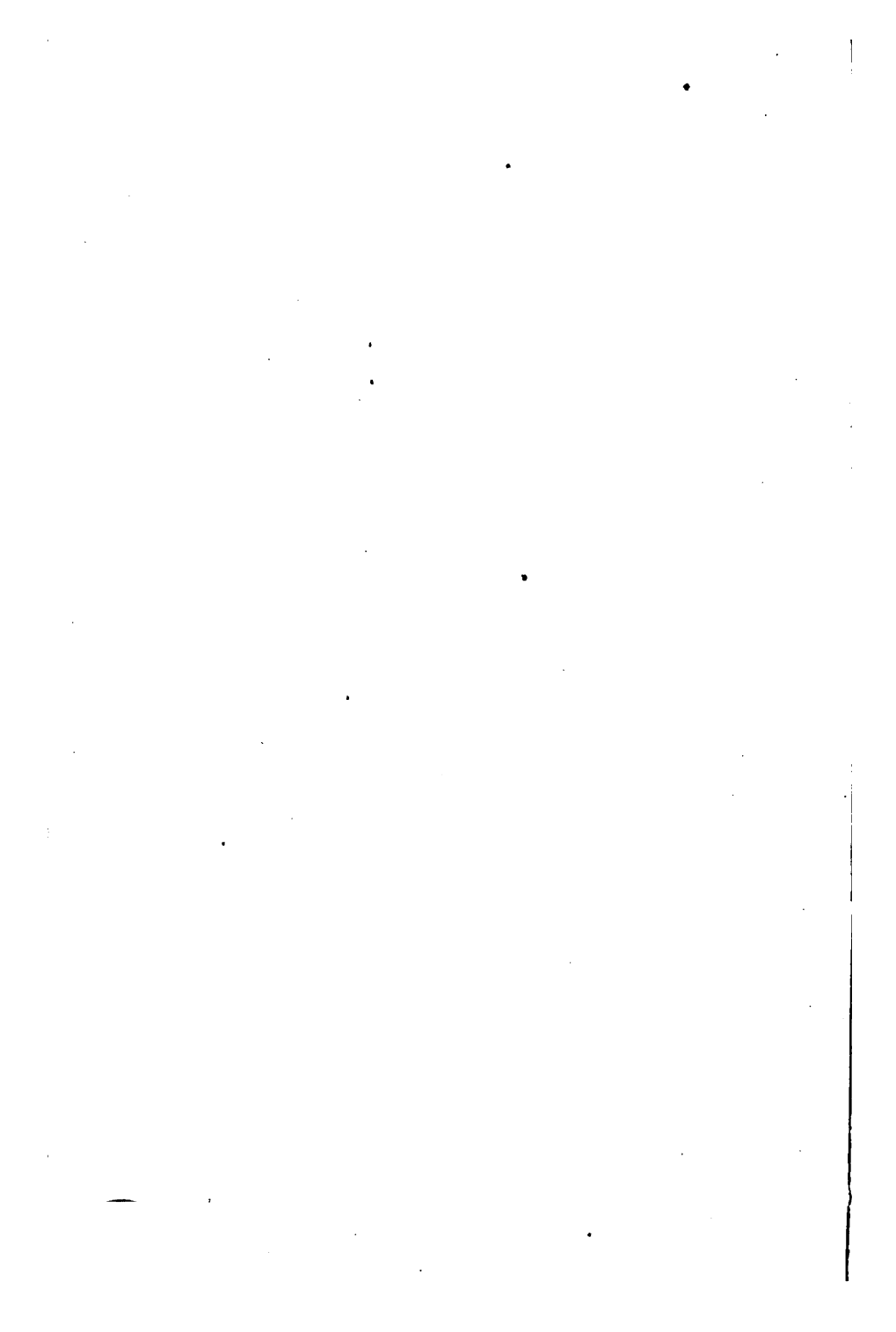
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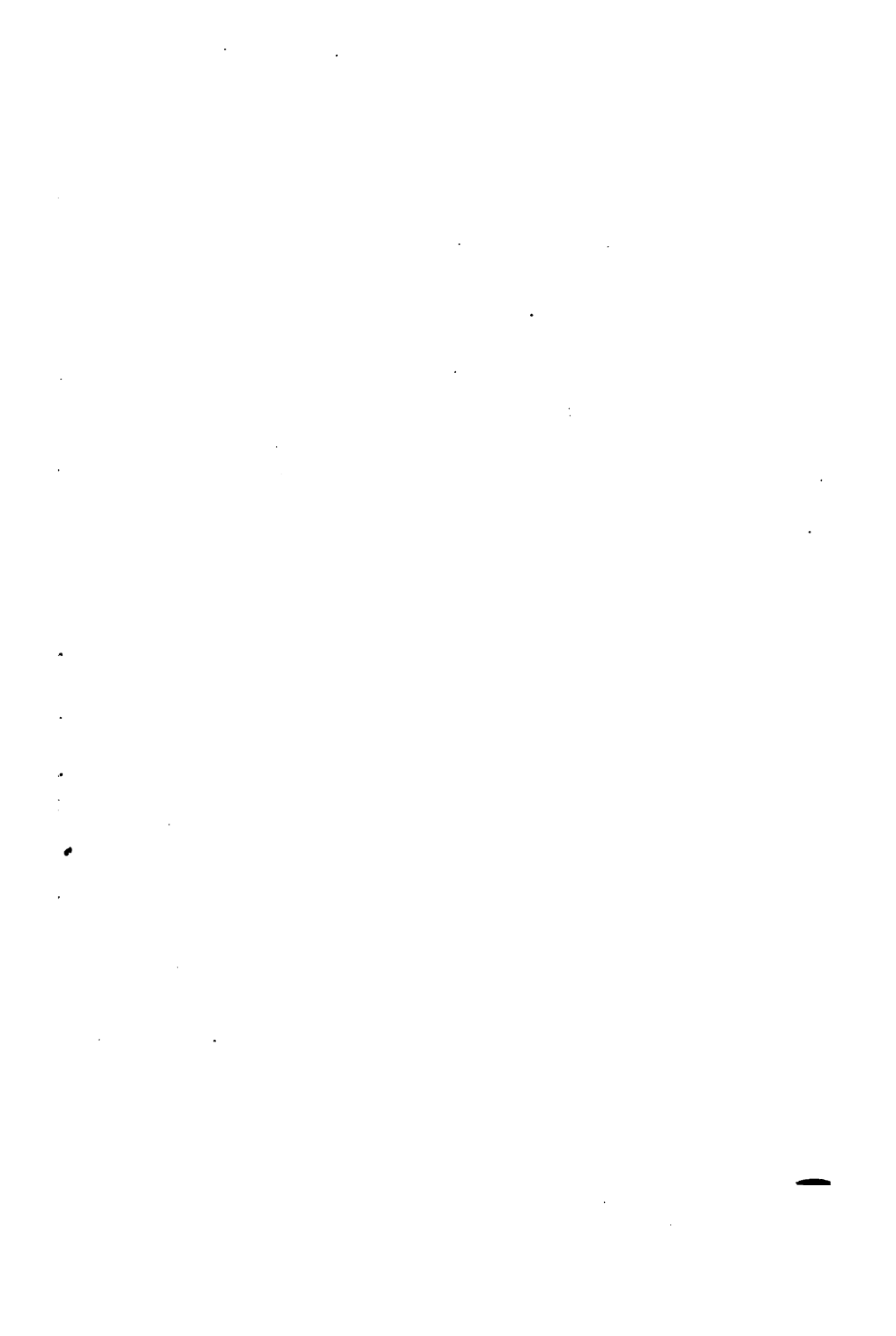
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BY

H. SEIGN BERRIN

Author of "The Court"

AND

STEPHEN G. TALL NIVEN

Author of "The Court"

LONDON
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1897

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FROM WISDOM COURT

BY

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Author of "The Sowers"

AND

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1896

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192
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To
EACH OTHER
WE DEDICATE THIS
WORK

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON A BED OF SICKNESS	I
ON MATRIMONY	9
ON THE POSTCARD	16
ON THE SEA	24
ON VISITORS	28
ON LUCK	35
ON UNSELFISHNESS	41
ON GOOD WORKS	48
ON LOVE	56
ON THE MUSIC STOOL	66
ON PURPOSE	73
ON GIRL	81
ON SUNDAY MORNING	90
ON MEALS	96
ON HEART	100

	PAGE
ON SLEEP	107
ON SOCIETIES	112
ON LANGUAGE	119
ON LEARNING	125
ON OUR OWN BUSINESS	132
ON PLEASURE	141
ON OUR BIRTHPLACE	149
ON DOGS	157
ON BEING ENGAGED	166
ON LETTERS	174
ON CHURCH	185
ON COURAGE	192
ON HONOUR AND GLORY	199
THE LAST WORD	207

FROM WISDOM COURT



ON A BED
OF SICKNESS

"When the sound of the grinding is low."

ONE of us has been ill. We know now that it is better to be ill if there is a good lock on the door, than to be hale within hail, so to speak, of one's relations. We went to church—that is how it came about—although we have to a certain extent refrained from publishing this fact, and we both caught cold. One cold was thrown off—literally thrown off—by a series of most

A

heartrending and collar-bursting sneezes. The other took a downward course, and fixed its fancy upon the bronchial tubes. In the middle of the night the victim awoke gasping and announced his intention of forthwith quitting this vale of trouble. We administered whisky—we always do ; and rubbed the affected throat with top-boot varnish because it smelt like Elliman's Embrocation. The remainder of the night was somewhat disturbed.

In the morning we called in a friend—house-surgeon in a neighbouring hospital. This promising physician owed one of us a trifle, and we thought it expedient to work off the debt in advice, and, if possible, medicine. He looked grave, and placed his ear against the victim's chest, while he made him repeat inane observations, such as "Ninety-nine!" "Ah!" "One, two, three, four!" We laughed openly at these proceedings. We knew this house-surgeon too well to be at all impressed by the tricks of his trade.

After much listening and considerable tapping the doctor made sundry statements of a depressing nature, and decreed poultices, a fire in the bedroom, and no stimulants. Moreover, he would not allow the patient

to smoke. He spoke quite plainly in the sick man's hearing and concealed none of his thoughts.

The result was that when he had departed we found ourselves face to face with a serious illness. After considerable deliberation we came to the conclusion that the street must be strewed with tan in front of the house. It was a narrow street, where no cabs ever passed, because it led nowhere except into a legal-minded court ; but we had always understood that tan was spread upon the roadway in front of the house containing a bed of sickness. Neither of us knew where to buy tan ; it was not in the Price List of the Civil Service Stores, and Walker's Dictionary was silent on the subject. We wrote to an enterprising tradesman in Westbourne Grove, who apparently mis-read our communication, for he replied next day giving an estimate for the maintenance of one brougham-horse, in weekly instalments. We were subsequently compelled to give up the tan.

For a whole week the dire sickness raged unknown to our relatives, but at the end of that time the news leaked out, owing, it is believed, to an invitation to a family dinner-party having been quietly ignored. We immediately received from the seven most useless

female relatives we jointly possessed, seven offers of help. Two of them were so urgent that they called for prompt action. We were compelled to telegraph perversions of the truth. Others were treated by post. Nevertheless, one philanthropist arrived next day in a cab, with luggage for a month and a small ($4\frac{1}{2}$ l.) jar of Beef Extract for the patient. There was a lamentable scene on the front door-step between a man with a pipe in his mouth and an elderly lady with an umbrella, two band-boxes and a bronchitis-kettle in her hand. We consented to add the bronchitis-kettle to our collection, but rejected all offers of personal assistance. Knowing our medical attendant as we did, and being intensely conscious of the trifling monetary matter which bound him body and soul to us, we had no compunction in risking his reputation. We credited him with a marvellous minuteness of observation, a deep and searching grasp of the situation. The patient was, according to our version of Æsculapius, on no account to see any one, more especially female relatives. His condition was such that the joy of meeting with a dear aunt might produce the gravest symptoms. "Not yet," we said with but indifferently concealed feeling ; "when he is a

little stronger—when the crisis is over.” We hinted mysteriously at assistance from the hospital, and tied up the door-knocker with an old sock in a manner which we deemed intensely professional.

In default of personal assistance, our relatives then took to showering upon us advice in an epistolary form. This assumed such gigantic proportions that the postman concluded (as we ultimately learnt) that we were either engaged to be married, or that some departed one had remembered us handsomely.

The postman, however, was not the only sufferer. The London Parcels Delivery man also found himself under a stress of work. By this means we received: four wooden constructions which the doctor informed us had been in use among the ancients as invalid tables; two cane-work articles for propping up something—possibly the patient—in bed; five china cups with half a lid and a long spout; two medicine glasses; three india-rubber air-cushions; one small hand-bell, and a broken thermometer. These, as far as we can recollect, with the trifling exception of nine bronchitis kettles with an abnormal development of spout, were all that we received in the way of furniture or properties.

Some kind folks—bless them—sent us more practical souvenirs. Thus, one dear old lady despatched every third day a box containing jellies, soups, eggs, and grapes. This was as it were a regular supply, and in addition we had at odd times other contributions. The patient appreciated this form of philanthropy, and the nurse waxed so fat that he is not in training to this day. The best of this relative (and she a distant one) was that she gave us no advice except that of the despatch of a box. She wrote post-cards—heaven shine upon her old head!—"Dear H., Have sent off to-day a small box containing hare-soup, eggs, and a few grapes. Mind, send back the empties."

Others sent us a lot of advice and very little soup—no eggs, and never a grape. Moreover, the advice was of such a nature as to be a positive insult not only to the recipient, but to the university which had bestowed some small honours upon him. We append an example or two.

"DEAR H.,—As cook's second cousin died of bronchitis two years ago, I have thought that you might be glad to have a few practical hints as to nursing

poor Mr. T. You must ensure a high and even temperature in the room. This is done by keeping up a good fire. On no account open the window, especially if there is an east wind. The doctor (I have not heard his name before) will no doubt see to medicines ; but I am told that lemon-juice with sugar and hot water is an excellent thing in cases where medicine is not obtainable. It is essential that the patient be kept quiet, and if Aunt Eliza should offer to go and help you I should make her understand once for all that you can manage without her.

“If there is anything *I* can do let me know ; I shall be most happy to come at a moment's notice and take entire charge. I can easily leave home just now as they are putting a new boiler in the kitchen. Write to me every two days.—Your affectionate great aunt,

“JANET.”

“MY DEAR H.,—I had diphtheria when a boy, so know all about it. Some people say it is infectious, but I don't believe them ; nevertheless you may as well telegraph poor T.'s progress instead of writing, as it is safer. If I were you I should have a trained nurse. Keep the room well aired, and pay your way as you

go along. No doubt you have something laid by for a rainy day. When next in town I shall let you know. You can meet me at the station, as I should like a chat with you.—Your affectionate uncle,

“JOSEPH.”

Another uncle despatched unto us a telegraphic note informing us that he had given instructions to a person called Barkle to pack up a dozen of port for us. We laid that port down—started a cellar as it were—but we are of too anxious a disposition for a cellar. We sampled the wine so often, just to mark its progress towards maturity, that there is now none of it left.

It was only when our medical adviser told us that the patient was convalescent that we informed him of our intention to cancel that trifling debt dating two Derby days back.

“All right,” he said. “We’ll call it quits; but I am coming in every other night to take duty. A fellow cannot nurse night and day for three weeks without losing his hold a little bit, and I don’t want to have you on my hands as well.”



ON
MATRIMONY

*"Be not confident in a
plain way."*

THIS is a large subject
—so large that the
most daring cannot but
approach it with misgiving.

In order to demonstrate that we advance with caution we shall begin before the beginning, and end, so to speak, before we have begun.

It is to the many, the light-hearted, the light-footed, the youthful, that the sapient remarks hereinafter set forth are more particularly addressed, in the full and comforting assurance that they will be in no wise heeded. It is, in fact, to the young men and maidens

who look forward to matrimony as the aim and end of their existence that we would throw out a few warning notes like the call of a steamer's whistle proceeding cautiously in a fog.

To the innocent maiden therefore, who alternately urges on and presses back the catastrophe trembling on the lips of some aspiring swain, we would say: Go and sit down quietly in some matter-of-fact place—say the bath-room. Have nothing to do with flickering fires in the twilight hours, or shimmering moonlight. Go, therefore, to the bath-room and, sitting quietly upon the washed-out and fórlorn chair you will find there, think!

Think whether he would be entirely satisfactory at a ball and at a funeral, at a wedding (not his own, for that would be expecting too much) and at a christening. Think whether he would be likely to make an idiot of himself at any of these functions. Make quite sure of these points before you go any further. Then, given a satisfactory result to your questions—satisfactory that is to your own mind, for it does not matter about other people—you may go on to other matters. You may meditate upon his personal appearance. Reflect that his hair will not always be

tidy. Contemplate him in your mind's eye with a smut upon his countenance, and see what he looks like then. Remember that he looks at himself in the hall glass before entering the drawing-room and do not forget that in his pilgrimage through life he may come to you through a hall where there is no looking-glass. Put him, like the proverbial beggar on horseback—mentally of course—and watch the result. In the same manner place an oar within his grasp, or the sheet and tiller, or a gun, strap skates upon his feet, upset him out of a boat if you like. If he goes through all these ordeals satisfactorily, if you are sure that in no one case you need feel too much ashamed of him, if above all you need not fear for his dignity in the presence of other men, then—THEN—you may think about *it* a second time.

To the young man (in the spring) we would say : Cultivate the friendship of her brother. There is an admirable candour about a brother which is likely to dispel the many illusions that arise from delicate evening dresses, semi-illuminated conservatories and gaslight generally. There is no gaslight about a brother. He will give you an unbiased opinion as

to Angelina's temper. We should not be surprised were he to volunteer details of a domestic nature as to the size of her shoes and the difficulties she encounters in making the ends of her waistband and her dress allowance meet. We would suggest gently that the art of waltzing has remarkably little to do with life after matrimony, and that it is a mistake to attach too great importance to a proficiency in that pleasant exercise. We would also venture to shrug the shoulder of scepticism at the advice tendered by former writers on this subject as to fixing the choice upon one who is domesticated and a good housekeeper, with a corner in her heart for a recipe. All that will come if you play your part respectably.

It is possible to be too good a housekeeper. Some women seem to be under the impression that their husbands are one large—what shall we say?—waistcoat. If you are fond of horses and all that appertains thereto it is worth while noting that Angelina is afraid to approach within a dozen yards of any one leg of a horse. If you love the country, the fact that the lady you propose proposing to is never happy off the pavement, is not without its value. Of course, these trifling

differences are of no consequence to love if it be spelt with a capital L. The lady-novelist has told us so. We would merely suggest that they are worthy of a little attention in passing. Beware of Glamour—fight against it—cast it from you as you would a cheap brand of Champagne. After indulging in either, one is apt to wake up with a head and without a heart. If, for instance, you are inwardly aware that Angelina's nose is slightly out of the perpendicular, do not persuade yourself that it is straight. It is infinitely better to accept her and her nose as you find them—remembering that your own chin recedes with rather more precipitation than was admired in old Athens. If the peerless one has a little, a very little fault in her character, do not pretend that it does not exist. Look it boldly in the face and meditate over it. Consider whether you will be able to stand it with equanimity during the years of a future which extends—goodness knows whither. If you find that you cannot stand it, be very wary; for that means that some day you will not be able to stand Angelina.

Remember that you take her for better and for worse, and do try to realise that there is in most lives

a good deal more of the worse than of the better. In fact, it would be expedient to repeat to yourself that you are taking her for the worse—the better is hardly worth bringing into account.

Finally, we would take you both aside to a quiet corner of the room, and there we would say :

Bless you ! Pay no heed to us, nor to any one in the world, so long as you are quite sure of yourselves and of each other. But be careful that you *are* quite sure. You are taking a huge step in life, but life is not a stationary pastime. One must step forward sometimes, and it is better to make a good honest stride than to sneak tremblingly along with faltering feet. You will have a little sunshine and a vast quantity of shadow, but the sunshine will be brighter if you share it, the shadow less dense if you walk hand in hand through it. Troubles will come, big ones and little ones. Please God certain little troubles will arrive that patter about the house with tiny feet making music as they go. There will be the sound of uncertain crooning voices on the stairs, and the sound will be very eloquent to your ears. Yes ! go on and prosper. And let us

know the date. We have a pair of blue china candlesticks presented to us on an auspicious occasion some years ago by a well-meaning but misguided paternal aunt. We always thought they would come in somehow.

P.S.—Do not furnish on the hire system.



ON THE POSTCARD

"The heart of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in their heart."

SINCE the invention of the postcard we have confined ourselves entirely to this mode of correspondence. We think with Shakespeare, that "brevity is the soul of wit," and are of the more original opinion that it is the cement of friendship and the safeguard of affection. What a vast amount of heart-burning and wounded feeling this custom of ours has saved our friends! When we take our holiday no one expects

voluminous accounts of our doings, and, so far from being offended at the occasional card of three lines, it delights them because they know we never write a letter to any one. We enjoy our day's shooting without the heavy cloud overhanging us of that letter to be written when we are tired and drowsy in the evening. When other people are scribbling excitedly to catch the post, with pens peculiar to a remote Highland inn, we smoke, with our legs on the mantelpiece, and that restfulness of mind particularly engendered by the fact that the way of peace is far from our companions. For us there is never a haunting vision of perturbed faces and anxious spirits, when we have forgotten to write on a certain day or omitted to inquire at what time the post goes out. We never promise even our postcards. We take care that they shall not only be a delight but also a delightful surprise.

When other people are getting warm and distracted over the problem of how to express sympathy with a friend whose uncle is dead, and has left him his money, we have calmly indited and posted a card—"Just heard your news. Feel much for you in every way," which pleases that friend and causes him to

say that, though we have fallen into that strange habit of only writing postcards, we are as kind-hearted and sympathetic as any fellow he knows.

When our cousin, who emigrated to Australia before we had made his acquaintance, loses his mother-in-law in the back-woods, our admirable post-card system obviates the necessity of searching for Scripture texts to express sorrow which we don't and can't feel, and to offer him consolation which he doesn't want. There would be something profane in a text on a postcard, especially on a foreign postcard.

When we are travelling abroad, let us say in Switzerland, no one expects us to write intelligently on the places we visit, or to be eloquent about the scenery. Intelligence would be out of place and there is no room for eloquence.

"LAUSANNE. HOTEL MAL SAIN.

"Arrived here. Send tin Keating by return."

amply satisfies, we find, the most loving and anxious of our relatives whom we have educated up to our short, sweet mode of correspondence.

How will our future son and heir bless this custom

of ours when we receive a report from Eton, "Good abilities, but incorrigibly idle."! For it is not dignified to be very wrathful upon a card which the page-boy is certain to peruse on his way to the pillar-box and upon which the postal authorities of our native village will comment with winks and smiles. How much more will this same son and heir call down benedictions on our habit when he outstrips his allowance at college. A postcard renders sound advice impossible and is not large enough to allow of an awful and graphic picture representing the final ruin of the debtor.

We own there are difficulties in the way of making love in this manner. But they are not insurmountable. We should think poorly of a young lady who could not read between the lines, even the lines of a postcard. Besides, English is not a universal tongue. There are other languages in which beautiful sentiments may be expressed without pandering to the vulgar curiosity of the postman, or gratifying the servant's thirst for information.

Indeed, there are reasons why, in affairs of the heart, the postcard system is especially to be commended. It may be said to be practically invaluable

to young ladies who are always in love, but not always with the same person.

One of us had in his desk for a long while a packet of letters, in an agitated feminine handwriting. There was an Arrangement announced in the Fashionable Intelligence of our newspaper one morning, and the same evening, over the meditative pipe, we watched those ladylike communications turn to ashes on their funeral pile. The pretty writer has less cause than many people to wish she had confined herself to the sweet simplicity of "one side only."

Neither has the pleasure we have derived from the receipt of letters been very great. We prefer postcards. Persons in pecuniary embarrassment could not, we think, on a card, stir our hearts to such practical sympathy as they sometimes do in a letter. A tailor, with a soul full of righteous indignation, would be much less impressive.

We should regard our maiden aunts who, as they say, "chat" with us through the post, with a far greater warmth of affection if they compressed their chatting—it might be done easily, and with no particular loss to any one—on to a postcard.

Neither do we receive with especial hilarity long

communications from friends abroad. There is a poorness about the paper, and a suggestion all over it of the pens having caught it, not to mention an illegibility about the writing, which aggravate us. We are especially tried if these correspondents are fond of describing the places they visit and of giving us a sort of epitome of the Guide Book, concerning their history. Last year, two cousins, young and enthusiastic, took a trip to Egypt and the Holy Land, from which places they wrote enough letters to serve Mrs. Robbem to light our fire with ever since. It is only fair to them to say that they warned us of their intention before they left. "Such wonderfully interesting places!" they said. "What a pity you are not coming too! (We did not think so.) But you may rely upon us to write and tell you all about them." We bore up pretty well under the description of the Pyramids and dissertations on Egyptology generally. One of us—we took turns—read these communications aloud at the breakfast-table, and when we came to the end—breakfast was a very long meal on these occasions—we both said, "How extremely interesting," and sighed. But when, after nasty descriptions of the warmth of the desert, our cousins reached

Palestine, their letters became altogether too much for us.

"At 10.30 A.M. on Tuesday last, we reached Aphek, so constantly the scene of contest between the Syrians and Israelites. Here, as you will remember, Ahab, King of Israel, defeated and took prisoner Benhadad, King of Syria. The weather continues hot. Ernest drinks nothing but the light wine of the country. I am a water drinker as usual." Now, although we are perfectly indifferent as to how much of the light wine of the country Ernest drinks, as to whether he drinks any, or whether he does not drink at all, and do not care in the least whether or no his brother has given up his stupid ideas on the subject of total abstinence, yet we think these puerile details infinitely preferable to gratuitous information about Aphek. We *don't* remember anything about it, and if we did we should want information on the subject even less than we do at present. Now how much better would it have been for us if our cousins had confined themselves to the cheap brevity of the postcard !

We each have a packet of letters in our desks now—almost the only ones we keep—which we don't

remember having considered particularly valuable at the time we received them. Neither has seen the other's packet, but the contents of each are probably much alike. "The last report was dreadfully bad and Papa was very much vexed. Mary has made another of those cakes, and she trusts the jam-pots won't be broken in the post. The east wind is very treacherous, so pray don't leave off your great-coat, and you *will* try to be always a good boy," &c.

On the whole, though we do not say so even to each other, we consider these letters—and such as these—may be safely allowed to form an exception to our admirable postcard rule. But we beg to inform everybody that it is the only one we allow.



ON THE SEA

*There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar."*

SOME people look upon the sea with the eye of disapproval. They take it quite seriously to be an evil which is not even necessary, for one cannot drink it, and like a much advertised commodity of the day, it won't wash clothes. They consider it in the light

of a let and hindrance standing literally in the way—between them and Paris, not to mention other pleasant places. They connect it with the smell of warm engine-oil—the throb of the screw and the voice of the purser asking for tickets when all their thoughts are centred on their inner persons. But the sea is a power in the world. The sea is the mistress of more hearts than ever was Helen of Troy. She is a siren who takes the best years of a man's life, and will not let him go, even when he is old and worn out. These hoary lovers may be seen hanging round her skirts at every port in the world, and on all coasts in the universe. They still live on her smile or frown, and can talk of nothing else. They are not jealous, for her smile embraces them all, and they have all known her frown. The aggressive love of Scotchmen and Germans for their native land is as nothing compared to the love of a sailor for the sea. What is the sound of the pibroch or the taste of leberwurst compared to the smell of tar? The smell of tar has a singular power over some of us. It lifts our feet from the pavement and sets them on the reeling deck. It transforms the roar of street traffic into that long, long duet, where the wind sings tenor through the

rigging to the sweet low baritone of the sea ; and the shuffling of feet on the wet stones is naught else than the surge of the receding wave beneath the lee quarter. All around us we see again the grey-green of troubled ocean, the curling crests ; the shadowy trough, and overhead the dense, impenetrable grey of a gale sky, where the cynic gull swoops down before the screaming wind only to rise again facing it with a defiant cry. And the street empties suddenly—it is the forsaken deck, for the steward is snug in his galley amidships, with his half-door bolted ; and the watch is crouching forrard at the lee-side of the deck-house. The deck is not only wet but the water is running from side to side four inches deep ; for the green seas plump over the weather rail as fast as the scuppers clear her. The green paint of the winch, and the bright red of the fresh-water pump stand out in strong relief against the universal dulness, and the white base of the mainmast is washed very clean except for a runnet or two of rust. The slack of the fore-top-gallant lee brace has been carelessly coiled over the belaying-pin ; for the end has fallen and washes lazily from side to side as she rolls.

On the quarter-deck the skipper and the second

mate stand quite still, with their booted legs set well apart, on either side of the wheel, where the best man is on his best behaviour. It is exercise enough to stand quite still when she is "running before it," even with life-lines stretched fore and aft.

Something has broken adrift down below and thumps sullenly as the vessel rolls. No—stay—is it so? Of course not. It is the throb of a printing-press in a cellar beneath the pavement, and the smell of tar came from a passing coal cart after all.



"Some thereby have entertained angels unawares."

WE do not refer to the afternoon visitor who can be dismissed with a cup of tepid tea and a few disparaging remarks on the weather, but to that visitor who pre-curses his coming by four letters and six postcards (changing the day of his arrival each time), and who finally bursts upon us, with a portmanteau, a Gladstone bag, and unlimited expectations of enjoying himself.

Our earliest experiences of the visitor genus were

other youthful (extremely youthful) Wackemtonians whom we were allowed to bring back with us to spend the holidays. We remember that their visits were usually much shorter than had originally been intended, for after we had unitedly reduced our sisters to tears and complaints, broken all the available furniture, and brought the cook to the verge of hysterics, there really seemed nothing to do but to fall upon each other and settle old scores by bloody battles. So our mammas corresponded, and the visitor went home three weeks earlier than had been arranged.

Later on, the Captain of the Wackemton first élève, or some other equally great hero, sometimes condescended to pay us a short visit. We took care, of course, to impress upon our parents and sisters what a deep honour was being conferred upon them. We abjured tea in the schoolroom, while games with our small brothers and "gins" for the servants were as if they had never been. If our sisters were pretty enough, the great man sometimes condescended to accept their photographs, and they always made a point of wearing their best dresses during his stay with us. We think, on recalling these visits, it must have

been slightly wearisome to have been so continually on such dignified behaviour. We can recollect heaving a faint sigh, not entirely of sorrow, when the last glimpses of a certain remarkable checked overcoat disappeared in the dogcart at the turn of the drive.

Our sisters, of course, have their friends to stay also. At one period of our lives we remember hating these ladylike visitors with a fierce and active hatred. We recollect pulling their hair surreptitiously and melting their wax dolls in front of the nursery fire. At a later stage, we fell in love with them, regularly and with them all, impartially. We did not mind if they were plain or beautiful, and we think they accommodated themselves to our sticky embraces really wonderfully. We must have been a perfect godsend to our sisters, for our love-making entertained their visitors during the whole of the stay. We had a regular plan of action, and can safely say we never knew it to fail. We always began by squeezing their hands with intense warmth and infinite depth of meaning when we bade them good-night on the first evening. By the next afternoon we were embracing them in the shrubbery. And after that the affair went with a swing. We gave them gooseberries, the

ripest there were, and toffee when we could get it, and they cut off pieces of their hair and pressed them discreetly into our possession in envelopes. We corresponded with them for quite a week after they left, and then our affection cooled and gave place to another.

We are now more critical over our sister's guests. We do not care for impassive young ladies, even if they be pretty, who arrive with huge arks of boxes, and sit upright all day in the drawing-room, waiting to be amused. Our three modest carpet dances and our best tennis party, on which we had previously reflected with no little pride, dwindle into a miserable insignificance under the calm, crushing glance of a young lady who has been used to balls at the Métropole, and to garden parties where they have Corney Grain. The mild admiration of our four nice curates must seem very tame to persons who (they tell our sisters so when they wax confidential over their hair-brushing at night) are accustomed to the very best devotion of the very best set in London.

At intervals, fairly long intervals, our rich aunt comes to stay with us. Of course we make no difference for her at all. That is one of the very first

things our mother tells her when she arrives. Aunt Bessie will, we know, be content to take us just as we are. Only somehow when she is with us we all, quite by chance of course, arrive down punctually for the nine-o'clock breakfast perfectly fresh and smiling. Whereas there certainly have been occasions on which the meal has been dawdled out until ten or half-past, and when we have committed the enormity of sitting down to it in carpet slippers and an ancient shooting jacket. At lunch, too, the cold mutton is relegated to the servants, and we eat roast chickens as though we had never finished up scraps in our lives.

Our aunt is of an Evangelical turn of mind, and we drive her three miles on Sunday to a place of worship where the minister wears a black gown and the congregation mumble the Thanksgiving after him. We do not so much as allude (such is our tact and delicacy of feeling) to the ornate Anglican service we are wont to attend ourselves.

But it is sometimes more trying to *be* visitors than to have them. We have been waylaid into houses where breakfast is at a quarter to eight, and in our unsuspecting innocence have been beguiled into staying with Spartans who are warm when there is no

temperature to speak of, and who consider bedroom fires an indulgence only less iniquitous than drink.

We have visited serious-minded friends who hide away all the profane literature on the Sabbath. We have been asked, for a month, on the strength of our character (entirely mythical) as a buffoon, to amuse a whole party of dull persons in a country-house.

We are of the opinion that there is much room for reform in the treatment of visitors. Personally, we seriously object to be constantly followed about by our host and asked in every breathing space what we would like to do *now*. We prefer it to be supposed that we are capable of spending half an hour by ourselves without getting into mischief, or being bored absolutely beyond recovery.

We object, too, to being set apart by our hostess to be the particular prey of one particularly unscrupulous young lady. It may save a great deal of trouble to announce at once that the plan never answers in our case, and that we invariably fall in love with some other girl who has been especially designed for some one else. It is wonderful what a radiance this other girl has shed over some of the (otherwise) dullest visits we have ever paid. For her sake we have

taken a sixty miles journey (in a parliamentary train) for the pleasure of a paltry little Saturday till Monday visit, and got up by starlight to catch the 7.50 back to town.

But that girl has now left the dulness of that remarkably dull country-house for ever. We still go back there sometimes, as in duty bound, and share the depression of those fellow-sufferers—her parents. If we were sentimental, which we are not, we might stride nightly about those dark shrubberies where we once wandered with her, lost in gloomy meditations, and vowing vengeance upon our successful rival.

But the dining-room being much warmer and more comfortable, we leave the shrubberies to toads and dampness and remember her between the puffs of a cigar and our host's rambling stories.



ON LUCK

"Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered."

AUNT ELIZA says that there is no such thing as luck, and we invariably agree with her when she is present. We have some small expectations from Aunt Eliza.

But when she is not there we admit that luck does exist. Our respected relative talks, in a hushed voice, of Providence, and when she does so we fold our hands and endeavour to look resigned. When she is

not there our reception of the trifling drawbacks of existence is somewhat different. We are not at all resigned, and we frequently say: "Blank our luck!"

If Aunt Eliza were amenable to reason, or within the reach of logic, if, likewise, we had no expectations, we could convince her in ten minutes that the most important adjunct to life and health is luck. No young man, no maiden, nor any other type of humanity mentioned in that hymn, of which the number and the words have for the moment slipped our memory, should be without it.

Luck confers appointments in unlikely places, and apportions incomes to the poor and needy. Luck glorifies a very common talent into genius, and advertises the twaddle of some of our literary compeers, who shall be nameless. Luck decorates with the Victoria Cross the breast of the man who lost his head in action, and was too bewildered to run away. Luck loses some well-navigated ships at sea, and brings into port vessels that be guided by the hand of an ass. Luck takes one by the hand and leads him through perils by sea and land, while she puts out her dainty foot and trips another on his own carpeted

stair, causing him to break his neck at a most inconvenient moment. Luck decides which of the two is taken, and which left working in the field.

If there be no such thing as luck, how is it that one man falls at a fence, gets up laughing, and bangs his hat into shape again, while another, falling at the same spot, lies quite still, and does not seem to care about his hat nor anything else that is his? If luck does not exist, how is it that one woman marries the man she loves, and becomes a joyful mother of children, while another walks alone through life in the darkness of a solitude which is only relieved at moments by a flickering gleam of the light that might have been?

If we are free from the influence of luck, how is it that some so distinctly have the roses and some the thorns? This is not an optical delusion, as the goody-goody people would have us believe, but a bare fact. There may be compensation in the hereafter—we can only hope there is—but as for compensation in the present, all that we can say is that we have not yet come across a person prepared to relinquish the roses in order to accept the thorns upon the chance of it.

The thought does not seem to have suggested itself to Aunt Eliza that Providence might have other things to think about than such a trivial item as the temporary happiness or misery of an obscure human being. Of course we do not mean to insinuate that *her* weal or woe is a matter of indifference to Providence because the thought is obviously absurd. She is constantly pointing out to us the prudence and forethought of Providence as demonstrated by the (to us somewhat trivial) incidents of her own life. She once thanked that Power, for instance, for having arranged that she should have the sweeps in the house at the precise period when one of us fell into a dangerous sickness, enabling her to offer, without inconvenience, her services as nurse.

Of course for her it is different, but for ourselves, we feel that we are scarcely justified in demanding of Providence such a minute care. We take it that luck is a handmaiden of Providence and are content to recognise her services. The Higher Power may look after Aunt Eliza, no doubt it does, for her existence is, according to her own showing, a matter of immense importance to the world; and it is no doubt from a sense of duty towards mankind that she

takes such care of herself. But we think that luck has been detailed to look after our more trivial existences and, without wishing to be too exacting, we must say that she is a trifle careless. Nay, she is abominably careless. She is sketchy and thoughtless.

To some men she gives abundantly of a blessing which is absolutely useless to them, and to others she denies a grain of good fortune by the aid of which they might attain earthly happiness. Sometimes she heaps one kindness upon another and when she has led the recipient to look upon such gifts as his due, she suddenly stays her hand. We cannot, in justice, say that she has ever tried this upon us ; she has never led us to expect much, and we are always very careful to heap praise upon her whenever there is the slightest excuse for so doing. We are not superstitious, we trust, but we like to keep on the blind side of Fate by avoiding the inside of ladders, getting up late on Friday morning, and, instead of uttering complaint, pretending that our lot might be worse.

Taking it all round we think that luck is kind. In such lives as are being lived out in proximity to our own, we are of opinion that there is more fair weather than foul, more sunshine than cloud.

Personally speaking, we have no cause for complaint. But, as for denying the existence of luck—as per Aunt Eliza's theory—much as we respect that worthy lady (before her face), we must be allowed to say one word (behind her back), namely, Bosh !



ON
UNSELFISHNESS

"The ruling tyrant Self is all in all."

THERE was, once upon a time, a thoroughly unselfish man. He was so confoundedly—no, we mean *profoundly*—good, that no one suspected him of it. He brought virtue to such a pitch of perfection that ordinary mortals like ourselves sometimes mistook it for vice. He denied himself continuously for the benefit of others; and others accepted his self-denial eagerly—nay, they revelled in it, and took mean advantages. He only wanted a crooked spine and long white fingers with which to perform upon church

organs at twilight to make him a perfect character for a book.

When there was only one armchair, this man drew forward a stiff-backed seat for himself, leaving the comfortable lounge for whomsoever it might concern. Those concerned were at first a trifle surprised, for they had moved in society and they knew that if you want anything in this world it is inexpedient to wait for some one to offer it to you. But this feeling of surprise soon died away and was replaced by a supposition that the unselfish man did not care about armchairs. This thought comforted the semi-virtuous majority of his friends, adding slightly to the softness of the seat. In the eyes of others, it merely lowered the unselfish one a few degrees, as a person in no way competent to fight his own battles. In the fulness of time it came to be an understood thing that he did not appreciate comfort, and that anything was good enough for him to sit upon.

This spirit pervaded all the waking actions of this young man, whom we have dragged out into world-wide prominence, because we think that the simple narrative of his life may serve as a lesson to others. In his dreams, we take it, he pictured a Paradise

where armchairs are to be found in such abundance that the blessed may all sit down at once.

He had a busy life, taking it all round ; chiefly because he persisted in doing many things which were not, strictly speaking, his business ; and for the performance of which other persons were paid a sufficient wage. Thus, he continually fetched things for himself, negotiating loans between the drawing-room and dining-room coal-scuttles, to save the legs of the servant—said legs being at the moment in a condition of repose upon the kitchen fender, while their owner enjoyed a second-rate (to say the least of it) novel. Strange to say, this self-sacrificing habit gained him no popularity in the basement circles. He was merely smiled at ; and those servants who had graced noble and genteel families opined that he did not know his place, drawing therefrom deductions derogatory to his ancestral aspirations.

Another mode of demonstrating unselfishness annoyed his servitors exceedingly. He was wont to rush to the letter-box at the postman's knock merely in order to save the maid the trouble of coming upstairs. To carry out this virtuous intention he filled the house with undignified shouts of " All right, Susan." Instead

of being grateful that damsel very naturally concluded that he wanted to spy upon her correspondence.

His aunts and other elderly female relatives described him as a dear, good fellow, and took practical means of proving the correctness of their judgment. They saddled him with a sort of non-commission agency, and became indebted to him for trifling sums which they invariably paid in stamps. He must have spent a considerable sum per annum in postage alone, not to mention cab fares to distant emporiums such as Shoolbreds or Whiteleys, both of which establishments these ladies imagined to be in the immediate vicinity of Wisdom Court, as they always asked him "just to run round." They never realised that threepence off the shilling amounts to as great a reduction on the price of a sixpenny-book if purchased in their native town, as it would if the article were bought in London.

He was honorary secretary to a dozen charitable institutions.—mark the "honorary," and if you do not understand what it means (which is just possible) look up its full purport in a dictionary. If you have not, however, a work of that description at hand, perhaps you will take our word for it, that an honorary secretary

is a gentleman who receives neither pay nor thanks, but only abuse, for services rendered.

He was an easy victim to designing parsons, than whom there is no less scrupulous class of men out of gaol. He managed bazaars and sacrificed the dignity of his lay manhood at Sunday-school tea-fights.

All this because he thought so little of his own feelings and so much of other people's that he could not persuade himself to say no.

He was never married because he could not justify himself in asking the young person in question to share an income not exceeding six hundred pounds per annum. We represented to him that, seeing his habits of life, she would undoubtedly have the benefit of five-sixths of the sum; but he was firm. He waited for the income to increase, and we have reason to believe that she waited also. It is just possible that she was prepared to share the income such as it was, and to take this foolish fanatic as she found him. She did not know him as we did—not in the same way, at all events. For she seemed to see something in him, which, strive as we might, we could not catch sight of. They are sometimes like that—those young persons. They have neither discrimination nor

prudence, and, to do them justice, they seem to get along remarkably well nevertheless.

He is, of course, dead now. It was not likely that he should live. He was altogether too good to associate with men like ourselves who toss up for the armchair or the odd kidney.

On his deathbed he apologised to his friends for giving them so much trouble. He said that he hoped that it would soon be over now, and then they need not worry about him any longer. He even wanted to see the undertaker himself, in order to save others the pain of making certain necessary arrangements. But we dissuaded him, telling him that he would never trouble us again, and that it would be a satisfaction to us to perform a slight service which he could not depreciate afterwards as unnecessary and conducive to the development of selfish habits.

We sometimes think that had he been a little less angelic, and a trifle more human, we should have respected him less when he was living and missed him more when dead.

Nota Bene.—We have deemed it expedient to insert this little sketch of a life, essentially illustrative of the noble virtue of unselfishness, instead of launching

into vague generalities upon the subject as is the custom of other essay writers. Is it not the human interest that lends a charm and a reality to all abstract things? Is it not the virtuous man we admire, not the virtues he carries brazened on his brow? Eh?

Nota bene, bene.—That girl married some one else !



PERSONALLY, it is not the good works we object to but the good workers.

Our sense of justice is, indeed, sometimes outraged when we are required to subscribe out of an annual income hardly sufficient to furnish ourselves with rolls, coffee and dress-clothes, for the hot breakfasts and Cardigan jackets of gentlemen who might just as well earn those luxuries for themselves.

Neither do we burn to add to the incomes of firemen's widows or glaziers' daughters. Why did not

the glaziers and firemen provide for their own families? If they could not provide for their own families, what right have those families to be in existence at all? If they died before they could make provision, we entirely disclaim having in any way hastened their end, so cannot be responsible for what it entails. Why should we pay for Hottentot reading-rooms when we ourselves pursue a literary calling unaided in any way by the Hottentots? *We* should like a swimming bath as well as the inhabitants of Bethnal Green, and we trust we are not yet so deeply immersed in vice, that if some fair district visitor (only she would have to be fair) were to take us in hand, we should in time be raised from the depths of the iniquity of a perpetual pipe and nightly toddy.

But if charity is unjust how much more unjust are the charitable. How damnable is the charitable young man! We know the word is a strong one, but when we remember how we ourselves, in company with all other of his brethren who do not share his peculiar views, have been hurled by him hundreds of times into perdition, we cannot think it *too* strong.

We have a personal friend who is addicted to deeds of mercy. We keep up his acquaintance because we

find him so exceedingly disagreeable that we feel sure he must be doing us good.

He is, we know, the pride of a happy home, and of an Evangelical rector. One of his good works is to fit little boys at Sunday-school for that better world which will be peopled entirely, we suppose, with beings like himself. Another good work is to convert fellow-passengers in trains to the right faith. The right faith being *his* faith, of course. He is very likely aware that to ply total strangers with questions of a personal kind is generally considered an unwarrantable impertinence. But the aims of this young man are so high that though an Apostle counselled courtesy, he feels himself exempt from the necessity of practising it. We believe he writes tracts. We are sorry, but not angry, for we feel this is more a misfortune than a fault. • The teetotal flabbiness of his countenance and the oily cheerfulness which pervades it, we consider as crosses which his friends should try to bear meekly. We have no objection to his wearing a blue ribbon if he thinks it looks nice. None whatever. On the other hand, we are conscious that we never enjoy alcoholic drinks so much as when we see that blue ribbon through the bottom of the tumbler. We think it must have

been a near (spiritual) relation of this friend of ours who signified not long ago in the *Rock* that he would be happy to give his Christian example in return for board and lodging in a good part of the town. We think, if anywhere, it will not be among those of his own persuasion that that young man will find piety as acceptable as thirty shillings per week.

We once stayed in the same house with another young man also addicted to good works. He was of the type of the mediæval saint or the early martyr. He was very spiritual and unearthly, so unearthly that it seemed a pity he had not been removed sooner to a finer and more aerial sphere. He was generally in church—always, we may say, when he should have been practising what is taught there in the world outside. His hair wanted cutting, and he never indulged in any manly sports. He was not ungentlemanly, and some ladies admired him very much. We were relieved to learn that he was engaged to one, a capable sort of girl, who would look after him. He was rather subject to trances—we do not mean visions of another world—but cataleptic trances which attacked him when he had done too many good deeds. He did a great many

good deeds. For one thing, he was founding a Brotherhood and drawing up rules for the Brethren. He could not be one himself as he was going to be married, which was a pity for the Brothers (if there ever were any—we never heard of them), as there was nothing to prevent him making rules, which might have served for the guidance of spirits, but which could by no possibility be followed by mortal men. Then, too, he had a Guild, by means of which pantomime chorus girls were to be led to combine his church views with their own profession. (We never heard of any chorus girls who managed this.) Also—but this was a secret—he wrote novels, in which love-making of greater or less morality was sprinkled with daily services and Sisters of Mercy, and interlarded with cheap little arguments on the celibacy of the clergy. We cannot honestly say he was an agreeable companion. He was too much engrossed with his brothers, and chorus girls and Anglican novels to have much sympathy to waste upon the ordinary occupations of ordinary people, and was so engaged in probing, penetrating and puzzling over his own soul that he was a weariness to other people's flesh.

We have seen many others upon whom good works

have a bad effect. We think their effect is often bad upon ladies. When they arrive at a certain age, a predilection for deeds of mercy makes them almost terrifying. We have in our mind's eye a spare person, with an inquiring nose, and the dress of an Order—we do not know what Order—who visits us sometimes in Wisdom Court, and whom the most ingenious of lies will not keep out.

She has a mission in Wandsworth, a mission that constantly requires boots—our boots. We do not now stoop to the subterfuge of saying that the pair on our feet are the only ones we possess. We did that once or twice, and she answered cheerfully that she should not in the least mind waiting for them a day or two until we had bought ourselves a new pair. Sometimes she comes round with cards, with the picture of a singularly unattractive Kaffir youth on one side, and ruled on the other for half-pence we are to collect from our friends for his clothing and education.

There *are* ladies, however, who take the good-works fever mildly enough. They are generally flighty and youthful, and are described by more serious-minded friends as “having some good in them after all.” They may be seen, very occasionally, when the prickings of

conscience have become too much for them, tripping gaily round a district, kissing sticky children with great warmth and perfect good temper, prodigal of smiles everywhere and of half-crowns—their papas'—in exactly the wrong places. It is these young ladies with whom curates fall in love, and whom they fondly imagine will develop into model rectors' wives and pattern parish organisers.

The charitable inclinations of other young ladies show themselves in attending Zenana working parties once a month—if they have nothing better to do. We have been informed by one of these charitable devotees that even a Zenana working party is bearable if you can get into a dark corner where you need not work, chat with a kindred spirit, and look forward to tea.

We have sisters at home, and they, too, like all good women, are a little given to good works. These good works lie about the drawing-room in woolly and unfinished heaps. Spasmodically they make waist-coats, which may indeed fit some one, only we have never met the person. We are quite sure of this, because he must be a man of such peculiar formation that once seen he could never be forgotten. Occa-

sionally they make a large bundle of their charitable endeavours, which they send to a mission and follow mentally with silent prayers that the garments may not fall to pieces in the post.

We have left until now the tale of our own deeds of mercy. It is both simple and short. Mrs. Robbem, worthy woman, compiles it all herself. The broken (and unbroken) meats from our table, with which we supply the needs of herself, her daughter, and her prospective son-in-law, a greengrocer of hearty appetite, are charities we solemnly affirm to be of no small dimensions. Neither do we forget the dumb creation. Only yesterday we fed the cat (Mrs. Robbem told us so) upon a pat of fresh butter, half a pie, and some fruit. We think, though we cannot remember having done so, we must also have given it generously of our Highland whisky.

But here is the sum-total of our good works.



ON LOVE

I

"On ne badine pas avec l'amour."

WE discussed the matter quite calmly. It was obvious from the first that such a subject as love must be treated by the light of midnight oil, in solitude. No pipes, nor slippers, nor tumblers of soda-water with something in it. One man must do this thing, and alone. But who? We were calm and elocutional at first, then we waxed a trifle heated and acrimonious.

Finally, we tossed up, but the coin had seen better days. It had lost its head and told tails on all sides like other things that have seen better days. At last we decided both to treat the subject—each according to his light—midnight oil or post-prandial paraffin according to circumstances. Hence these presents.

Some deluded writers now dead—very dead—so much as to be termed classical—maintained that there was nothing new to be written of love. That was long ago, and since the lamented demise of the gentlemen referred to many other authors have touched upon the subject. Yet we maintain that there is still something to be said. Because the great authors of the past recorded their opinions, are those of the present to keep silence? Have we nothing to say about love? Haven't we?

We fell in love ourselves—not once, because such self-restraint would have been mean and narrow-minded, but many times. On each occasion we were perfectly convinced that no one, not even Ovid, had felt anything like that which we felt. We were satisfied that neither Helen, nor Cleopatra, nor Beatrice could hold a candle (why a candle, by the way?) to the Angelina of our affections for the time being. We

were also convinced on each occasion that neither Paris, nor Antony, nor Dante had ever loved. We only had really loved. All former passions were spurious imitations, without trade-mark or signature (in blue) across the label.

We thought of Angelina all day, except at meal-times ; for we were young then and played a pretty knife and fork. We pondered over her charms, more especially at the poetic hours, at sunset, and on awakening in the morning, instead of getting up and striving vainly to be in time for breakfast. If there was a pause between the courses, our thoughts flew to Angelina. We did not meditate much upon this sweet subject during the stilly hours because, as previously mentioned, we were younger then, and our conscience never was of much account ; so we slept steadily through those stilly hours and on into the noisy ones.

Looking back now in calm reflection we cannot but realise that we never had the malady very badly—because we slept and eat so uncommonly well. Still we had experience, and at the time we never doubted the gravity of our own symptoms. Therefore, with all due modesty, we venture to assert that we are as com-

petent to discourse upon this matter as gentlemen now lamentably dead, who have left works in a language now fortunately the same, treating the subject from the standpoint of one paltry love only.

We know, for instance, and do not hesitate to state, that love, like the law, is no respecter of persons. In our callow youth we fully determined that we should one day fall in love with a tall fair woman of magnificent proportions, and as soon as we were old enough we promptly presented our affections to a small dark person of no proportions whatever. Then it was a girl with brilliant red hair—we know now that it was red, but we thought at the time that it was auburn. Some of them had faults of which we were aware at the time—others possessed—well—drawbacks to which our eyes are now more fully opened. We can detect them as we look up from this learned paper and contemplate the photographs of eleven young ladies ranged along the mantelpiece. Above these pictured semblances, in the frame of the mirror, is suspended the simple legend—"It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." That is all. We are simple, strong-souled Englishmen, concealing beneath a calm exterior many sorrows—

possibly eleven—and no one will ever know what we have gone through in our time.

We look back now with chastened joy at those sadly happy, thrillingly miserable days, and there arise before our eyes many memories. Ah ! such memories. One especially : a memory of chocolate-creams. What quantities of these did we, in the generosity of our loving hearts, present ! What a large proportion did we, with the ardour of youth, consume to our own cheek ! It seems to us, by the way, that the art of manufacturing chocolate creams will soon be numbered among the lost ; one does not meet with anything worth eating nowadays. And there are memories of ball-suppers, when we schemed and plotted to secure a certain secluded little table or to cut another fellow's dance. Ball-supper chickens did not taste like cold cardboard then ; and we had nothing but praise for the most evil brands of champagne.

Another memory is very sweet to us—the memory of our silence. We never spoke our love, and, as far as we can judge, the worm has done the bud no harm ; our cheeks never were damask, and at present they are not pale. It was not prudence ; it was something higher than that. On each occasion we felt that a

love like ours was not to be put into mere words, and we never breathed it. No harm was therefore done. The little dark girl has other little dark girls round her who call her mother. She of the auburn tresses has dropped out of our line of country; she may be married, or she may be dead, and we cannot conscientiously say that either contingency would affect us.

But through all these chances and changes, the thing itself—the abstract thing called love—lives on. We are dimly conscious that it is there still, and we feel that we want something or somebody. Something we have not yet had, somebody we have not yet seen. In fact we are in the position of a certain French gentleman: “*Nous changeons d’objet mais la passion reste.*”

II

“But the greatest of these is love.”

It happened to one of us to find himself in the middle of the North Atlantic in a disabled steamer—a steamer with fourteen feet less length than her builders had given her, by reason of a slight difference of opinion with an iceberg as large as the island of Herm. There was a quick panic, that sort of panic

which makes men perspire, and this was followed by a long slow panic. When abject fear lasts more than an hour it begins to leave traces upon the countenance, and there were some countenances in that hot saloon that evening which acquired certain lines in a very short time—lines engraven so deeply that a lifetime will not suffice to obliterate them. There was a good deal of human nature about in the atmosphere, as well as the smell of paraffin and sal volatile. We learnt some strange things that evening about each other—we learnt to respect a certain quiet little sailor-man, the first officer, whose table was avoided because he was so dull and silent. We learnt to despise a certain fat newspaper man who was writing a book ; that fat man came a cropper in the estimation of the saloon, and never recovered himself. To see him blubbering with fear made some of us despise ourselves without knowing why.

And one of us—the one who happened to be on board that steamer—learnt that Love is greater than a good many things beside Faith and Hope. There were, namely, a young man and a maiden on board. We fell in love with the maiden first day out ; second day out the young man took her away

from us and kept her. It was not a flirtation—it was worse.

When the crash came these two were sitting at the after end of the saloon table—the dark end—looking at a book. They never even rose from their seats in the first panic, and during the slow agony that followed these two young people were obviously unmoved. They were so absorbed in each other that they forgot that the stout steamer beneath them was slowly sinking.

It was an awakening. It was the first shake, and we have been rubbing our eyes ever since. Most assuredly there must be something in this same love of which poets sing such volumes, against which cynics rail. There is more in it than there is in anything else in the world—ay, more than there is in everything else put together! We do not mean love's young dream, nor love at first sight, nor secret love, nor blighted, nor any at all except mutual love. We mean the love that cannot, in the ordinary course of human affairs, come to men before the age of twenty-five, to women before twenty—the love that has nothing to do with ball-rooms, picnics, or bazaars, or garden parties, the love that is not only for the fair

weather, but also for the foul. This is the love that may be spelt with a capital L. The rest is mere play—a very pretty game, but still a game and nothing else.

The man whose love is not returned thinks himself a very fine hero, and pities himself with no small sympathy. He thinks over this love of his, and spells it with a huge and portly capital. He does not know that his love is absolutely nothing—is a mere feather on the wind until it meet with another love, a love which purifies it, and elevates it, and ennobles it, until the outcome hardly resembles the poor weak desire of the eyes which he took to be love.

Just as it takes two to make a quarrel, so it takes two to create love. No man can do it for himself. He may be able to formulate a very pretty theory for himself, a sort of theoretic love based upon novel-reading and built up by the imagination ; but he must present it to some maiden, and she must accept it before it can be a thing of any shape whatever. Moreover *she* shapes it for good or evil—to be a thing of joy for ever or a ghastly horror. And on the principle that diamond may cut diamond, the only instrument the maiden uses is love itself.

It is out of such a love as this—a love with no

romance, no poetry in it—that happy lives are snatched, happy, that is, as lives go. For we all come to a compromise in the end. We begin by a desire to have all or nothing ; we strive after the former for a few years, and, thank Heaven, few of us have finally to put up with the latter. It is those who accept the compromise frankly who find life pleasantest. The greatest happiness lies in the pursuit of a small happiness.

We have spoken.



ON THE
MUSIC STOOL

*"I am never merry when
I hear sweet music."*

WE have never sat there, professionally, ourselves. But we do not see why this fact should disqualify us from offering our opinion on those who do. On the other hand, we think it contains some excellent reasons why our views on the subject are especially worthy of attention. First of all it is the only chance we have ever had, or are ever likely to have, of airing them. How many long, long sonatas have we sat through, unsupported by the hope (which we can see is buoying our companions and helping them to keep up a fairly patient and attentive appearance) of giving an opinion on the touch and style of the performer when he has finished. No one would listen

to what notoriously unmusical persons like ourselves might have to say.

Neither can we look forward, like most people, through the protracted melancholy of half a musical evening to the second half when we might have a chance of displaying our own accomplishments.

We are too polite to talk, and our scheme of flight to the garden and a cigarette is always found out and spoilt.

We appeal then to the compassionate feelings of those readers who have themselves been tortured on the rack of "a little music after dinner," and think that they, at least, will listen to the complaint of a fellow-sufferer.

We think, then, that drawing-room music is nowadays too classical. This is a bold saying, but when we remember that during the wildest flights of genius of Grieg and Chopin, we have seen gentlemen dozing or stealing surreptitiously in the direction of the newspaper, and ladies yawning behind their fans or breaking into irrepressible whispers and a burst of conversation before the last chord has died away, we are convinced that we are not alone in our opinion. We think we should like classical music better—we know

that our tastes are low—if it was prettier and had sometimes, for a change, a little tune in it. We have not forgotten how, when we were younger and shyer than we are now, hearing gruesome strains from an adjoining room, we condoled with a lady upon whom we were calling on being troubled with that necessary evil, the piano-tuner. We afterwards discovered the unpleasant sounds were caused by the lady's most promising daughter playing her finest Rondo in her finest style.

Some kinds of classical music are certainly very exciting. Particularly exciting we have found, if they are performed on that piano in which we have a personal interest and which is not hired out for the evening only—a case in which it is unsatisfactory, and must, indeed, give the piano-monger a low opinion of our musical abilities if some of the notes are not broken or impaired. We find there is a good deal of *nervous* excitement in connection with this kind of music, if the performer is a relative or personal friend of our own. The knotted veins stand out on his forehead in a way which is common to the heroes of ladies' novels, but which in real life looks both unpleasant and dangerous. He writhes about on the

music-stool and rolls from side to side in such a manner, that we are so nervous for fear he should fall off and some horrid accident ensue, as to be altogether oblivious to the brilliant and startling mazurkas to which he is treating us. It is more conducive to peace of mind to hire a young man with the piano, and then of course the more damage he does himself the more certain we are that his music has been of the right kind.

But if classical music bores us, and it does sometimes very much, the sentimental singing of the ordinary young lady or gentleman, though certainly more entertaining, is scarcely less trying. It strikes us, especially with the young ladies, that they are taught too much. It seems a pity that a large number of them are ever taught at all, because in the way of voice there is really nothing to teach. Others appear to have had what natural voice they may once have possessed taught out of them. From nearly all, any sort of feeling or expression, supposing they originally had any (but the supposition is a large one) has been taught away. We have heard young ladies sing songs, describing rapturous meetings and agonising partings, the birth of a blissful love and the death of a most

melancholy one, with such a perfect uniformity of manner, as to make them indistinguishable the one from the other. It is not that the performers do not crescendo and piano where they have been told to do so—in fact they are so obedient that we always fancy we see the wraith of the master bending over their shoulders, and frightening away the little natural feeling the poor things might have indulged in, had they been left to themselves.

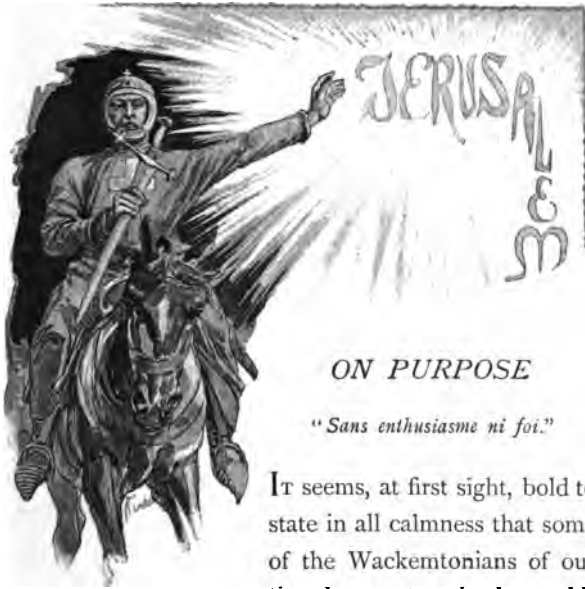
We have come to the conclusion that it cannot be considered the correct thing, nowadays, to sing so that the words of the songs are audible. Having read over quietly a few of these poetical effusions, we are inclined to think that the fashion is not altogether a bad one. However, as we so seldom hear the words, those we do hear strike us rather forcibly. We very distinctly remember a certain young man, at a musical party some years ago, who stood up and wished in melody and six verses that he was a bird, a rose, a clustering vine, a breeze, a glove, and some other object which we have forgotten. He was a pale, weakly looking young man, and we recollect accounting for the variety of his desires by supposing that he felt *any* change must be for the better.

Young gentlemen who sing comic songs are occasionally very pathetic. Young gentlemen who endeavour to imitate Corney Grain in musical sketches are almost always heartbreaking. Not quite always, however. We have a cousin who is always so immensely amused with his own wit in this way that every one else becomes amused to. The same enterprising youth sings all the principal comic songs of the day to an accompaniment of his own composition, consisting of three chords in the treble, and two notes in the bass.

We dare to advance one more heinous opinion, which is, that it is by no means always the finest music which affords the greatest pleasure. The weak-voiced young lady who is begged to sing that sweet thing of Tosti's after dinner, is doubtless quite as ardently admired by her stout papa sitting on the edge of his chair in the corner, and getting stouter and warmer every minute with honest pride, as a great public admires Sims Reeves or Madame Patti.

For ourselves there was, and is no longer, a little, white-haired old lady in the country to whose sweet singing we would rather have listened than to the finest prima-donna in the world.

We have just spied a barrel-organ—a barrel-organ we know—outside our windows, and break off thus suddenly to rush precipitately downstairs to give the musician twopence—to go away at once.



ON PURPOSE

"Sans enthousiasme ni foi."

It seems, at first sight, bold to state in all calmness that some of the Wackemtonians of our time have got on in the world.

Such nevertheless is the case. We do not mean that they have invented a patent self-lighting candle, nor do we intend to affirm that they have bought something at a very low price to sell it subsequently at a higher, and so on to carriages, horses, and a useless steam yacht. We do not call that getting on, for at Wackemton we never learnt the value of time, or money, or our neighbour's opinion.

Some inquiring persons may be inclined to seek the reason why *we* have not got on, and if they find it they will know more than we do ourselves. We have tried, but there is a hitch somewhere. This, however, is quite beside the question. The question is: Why do some men get on while others remain stationary? There is considerably more in this query than meets the naked eye. Because they have talents—because they have genius—because they have perseverance! Exactly so. But we have met men of talent—nay, men of genius—in strange places. We have picked them up and propped them against lamp posts. We have lent them trifling sums, which they have hitherto omitted to return. It has been our humble good fortune to pass on the road of life, and leave irretrievably behind, men of perseverance, of aggravating, estimable goody-goody booky-booky perseverance.

We have in our turn been left behind. Men have walked past us in whose heads there could scarcely have been any brain whatever.

And again we ask why? But like other preachers we should be considerably surprised if you got up and proceeded to answer the question. No! you

must keep your seats. The matter lies in a single word, namely—Purpose.

This is the leaven that leaveneth the whole of a man's life. If a man have a purpose at the back of his head it matters little what else there be. It is the perspective without which a brilliant picture will necessarily lack depth. This is merely the result of experience, of personal experience, so the argument must be taken for what it is worth in these days where women try to write of men and men attempt to expound the doctrines of spiritualism. In and around Wisdom Court there is a lot of human nature. It is not in the country that one finds variety in intellect, but in towns, and Wisdom Court lies in the very centre of the greatest city that the world has ever seen.

There are brilliant fellows around us whose light is very bright close at hand, but it has quite failed to catch the eye of the outside world. There are great men in the Court who were mere fools at Wackemton—we kicked them in those days because they were fools and we were anxious for them to realise the melancholy fact. We have known plodding boys who took prizes and in the course of nature developed into

plodding men. Great things were expected of them by persons setting themselves up as judges of the human animal, and they failed to perform the great things in many noticeable instances. We believed in self-constituted judges in those days, but now we do not. We have a theory of our own, and a man with a theory of his own never listens to his neighbour.

Our theory is that plod or brilliancy, good luck or bad luck, influence or independence, are all alike subservient to purpose.

If a man have a purpose in life—a real strong purpose which never leaves him night or day, in joy or sorrow, in work or play—that man will, in all probability (say ten chances to one), attain his purpose before laying the things of this world aside. For it would appear that we are under the eye of a great tutor in this world, a tutor who teaches us the general lessons of humanity, not as individuals, but as a class, not as suited to our lives, but in respect to existence as a whole, not for our own good but for the good of the human race. He teaches (with illustrations for the Kindergarten-class—a large one) that honesty is the best policy, that in thinking little of ourselves we benefit ourselves, that excess brings its own punish-

ment. These and a few other broad principles are inculcated pretty forcibly, but the rest is left to the individual student. And therefore a man with a purpose stands a good chance of attaining his desire.

A woman with a purpose is in a still better position, for she usually enlists some one to conduct the rougher part of the campaign for her. In addition to this fact fortune naturally favours her because she is so handicapped. Also, "*Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut.*" The Frenchman who first made that statement took upon himself a certain responsibility, but he had considerable justification. In this respect we do not refer to women possessing an object outside the recognised limit of their activity. We refer merely to those sweet purposes of love which grow and flourish exceedingly in strange hidden places. We object to objects with an object, but we fall down, mentally, and worship a woman who knows her own mind in matters of love. We should like all women to love only one man, and he should be chosen by her own heart and not by circumstances. We feel that there is something wrong in the woman who marries for money or for the convenience of the thing, and then in later years goes about telling her neighbours that

love came afterwards. We are very sorry to hear it. Love should have come first—the thing that arrived later was a spurious imitation. That woman was without purpose, and it would have served her right had her husband taken to drink.

For our own part we cannot conceive a greater happiness than to be the purpose of a woman's heart. In fact we are quite open to an engagement, but to prove good faith the applicant must be prepared to make a handsome settlement.

N.B.—Photograph on application, for two stamps.

It is not easy to distinguish a woman of purpose, because the heart of a woman lies farther away from the surface than that of a man; but the man of purpose may be detected by the observation of a few simple facts.

He smiles upon most men as some of them smile upon women, a mere superficial mockery of a smile as mechanical as the grasp of his hand. It is useless to be insulted by this airy reception because he would not be impressed if you were. The truth is that you do not come into his purpose. You are useless to him. Were you of use he would probably receive you gravely and with a certain distinction which

would not fail to gratify you. He is by the same token an unpopular man, he is indifferent to general conversation and is never a talker. He goes on his way through life placidly and with apparent contentment, and if he be a true man he keeps his purpose to himself.

For our own part we have generally found it expedient to treat them like sleeping dogs. We shun them unobtrusively but with great care. If, for instance, on coming home late at night from, say, a Young Men's Christian gathering, we see a light in the window of a friend whom we know to be possessed of a purpose, we never dream of knocking at his door and proposing to drink a glass of whisky with him. There are other of our friends who would deem it an insult were we to pass their doors in this manner. But the man of purpose keeps strange hours and has strange habits of living. Some of them have been known to get up early in order to work, but these have invariably made slow progress on the ladder of fame. We have known many of them intensely lazy, very good fellows, with a light heart and an open purse, but—but a closed soul. Contemplating the question from a social standpoint, it is perhaps just as well that

there are not more men of purpose in the world; for they do not contribute much to its happiness. It is the people who do nothing to whose presence must be attributed the happiness of existence—people who have time to acquire “parlour tricks,” to remember conundrums and little anecdotes, to perform feats of legerdemain with a table-knife, and to extract music more or less sweet from various instruments.

But we must confess to a certain sneaking admiration for some men who are not as we are, who, in fact, possess the incentive of a purpose.



on Girl

"To give subtilty to the simple."

WE do not share the opinion of many young gentlemen of the present day who regard girls as differing slightly in size and colouring, but to all intents and purposes practically the same. We believe, on the other hand, though we allow that facts often appear to be against us, that even the modern young lady has an individuality of her own. We have in our time met girls with very startling individualities.

The learned young lady, though by no means a phenomenon nowadays has an individuality which, to ourselves personally, is rather alarming. This, doubtless, is the fault of the moral cowardice of our

dispositions. Though we know that nothing is so good for young men at an age when they are certainly apt to admire themselves a little unduly, as to be taught their proper position and real merits, yet, like other good things, the lesson is sometimes a trifle unpleasant. Though we know it is for the public well-being that bad jokes and the very best of puns should be received unsmilingly and their meaning demanded, yet all this (we speak feelingly) strikes us as a little hard. There is a superiority about the young person of learning which, we confess, crushes us. That compliment of ours—a very delicate one, by the way, and perfectly original, which has pleased twenty young ladies before now—we dare not try on her. Neither can we air those three favourite quotations; she would discover a misplaced word or give us to understand by a glance—there are no glances so speaking as those of the young person of learning—that she had heard *that* fifty times before.

Then, too, we object to her talent for information. We hate being informed. What right has any one, we ask, when, let us say, Midas is mentioned in a conversation, to know, or to let us know, that she

knows anything more about that king than the stupid old story of his money and ass's ears?

We think this way of imparting knowledge in poor taste. It is not, however, the learning of the educated girl we dislike, but the learnedness. If Greek roots and trigonometry amuse her—they never amused us—let her continue, by all means, those harmless pastimes. But is there—we ask for information—any subtle influence in those occult studies which need so seriously affect the dress and carriage of the lady student? Is it a necessary consequence of her intellectuality that her garments should hang about her in the loose and incompact manner in which they certainly do? Glasses, we suppose, are always really necessary for eyes which see so far into the mysteries of human existence, and we are resigned to the custom of dragging back the hair from the forehead, because, of course, we understand that if one *is* intelligent one must show it somehow.

The muscular girl, like the intellectual girl, is a product of our own times. The demure young lady, whose athletic tastes never soared higher than a game of croquet with the curate (mama looking on from an arbour), has been replaced by the lawn-tennis cham-

pioness, the captain of a cricket eleven, or even the enterprising hockey player.

The muscular girl is always large and strong. Her friends call her ungainly, and she calls herself *développée*. We like her, of course, very much, because we now feel that there is no sport or pastime in which we may not enjoy the society of ladies. If we ever flattered ourselves that the regulation feminine costume would always leave us supreme in athletic exercises, we have quite ceased to do so. Last week we had the honour of playing a cricket match against a team of girls, and there met a muscular young lady who had designed a costume for herself for the occasion. She said she thought it was "rather Greek." We do not wish to doubt her word. The Greeks, we know, were indifferent to waists. This girl was indifferent to her waist. Otherwise we ourselves saw nothing very Grecian about her. If there was, we think the ancients were given credit for more taste than they possessed, and that fashions have altered very much for the better. There is a delightful independence about the muscular girl, and we think she must be responsible for a great deal of the laziness and want of chivalry which it is fashionable to lay at our door.

She scorns to be helped over stiles and on with her jacket. No one ever asks her more than once if she is tired or has waltzed too long. She is often of the opinion that the brain develops in proportion to the body, which is a convenient theory in her case, but not always a true one.

The girl with a mission is, we had almost said, a modern evil. But when we consider how many disagreeable persons to whom we must otherwise have been polite and genial have been removed from our midst by these missions, we certainly prefer some girls with them than without them. We don't wish to be unkind, but we cannot help noticing that it is invariably those girls whom no one can get on with at home, who consider themselves particularly suited to reform the world abroad. If they ever come back to civilisation—and they generally do when the excitement of being virtuous has worn off—they talk of nothing but the hospital or the slum for the rest of their lives. Considering this we are sorry that so many professions are open to ladies. Very soon, whenever we are not *doing* business we shall be talking about it.

The girl addicted simply to good works—against

which, of course, we have nothing to say—has also sometimes a habit of introducing them in the wrong place. We have met young ladies who have abstracted pennies from us for a Breakfast Fund, during a pause in a waltz, which—although we have an established reputation for generosity, and don't grudge that penny in the least—is, we think, taking an unfair advantage of us. We have also seen energetic and, no doubt, well-meaning girls make a whole breakfast-table of their friends feel alike gluttonous and lazy by rushing off in the middle of the meal to a district or a Sunday School. The same young persons, when we are lolling in long chairs with pipes, in the garden on hot summer afternoons, sit upright and sew at scarlet flannel and calico garments (perfectly correct garments, no doubt), which mis-timed diligence is not a little aggravating.

But the larger number of the girls we meet in society belong—we hope the classification is not severe—to what we call the inane class. Our experience of this sort of girl has been large. We meet her chiefly at dances, where she is in her element, and where a slight feebleness of mind is lost sight of beneath a pretty dress, an excellent waltzing step, and

a good-natured smile. When she sees our jokes she is always ready with that smile, and never has any objection to a quiet flirtation on the stairs. From her conversation—she has not much of any kind—we should say that she lives entirely either on the memory of a ball that is past or on the hope of one that is to come. If she has brothers, she is seldom egregiously vain. Her normal condition is rather one of assured self-satisfaction. We believe that she is very popular with our sex at all society gatherings, but we own that, personally, we have found even one evening at her side a trifle long and wearisome. Sometimes, we confess, we have speculated over the fire and our ancient meerschaums as to what life would be like for either of us were we entrapped into matrimony by the undoubted attractiveness of that pretty figure and pretty smile, that kind gentleness and good nature. We reflect how that smile itself would bore us after a time, as we saw it morning after morning perfectly unchanging and inexpressive over the coffee-pot at the end of the table. Is it unlikely that we should find out, after marriage, that the pretty silence in which the young lady had listened to our high-flown ideas and beautiful sentiments—even to the poetry (our own)

which we considered other ears too gross to hear—had been, after all, the silence of a wandering attention, or, worse still, of an utter stupidity? The highest hopes we should have any right to cherish would be that she would take the same absorbing interest in our dinners as she once took in her dances and admirers, and that she would feel pride in seeing her children better dressed than some one else's. To what small, small talk should we have to listen with interested expressions by the hour together! In what small, small squabbles should we be involved with her relations, and our relations, and the governesses and servants!

If we were not sure that our souls were far too great ever to come down to the level of the soul of an inane young lady, we might fear *that* catastrophe. But as that would be out of the question—what a tragedy would remain! Not indeed a vulgar, noisy tragedy, at which a gallery might hoot and whistle and the stalls and boxes raise their eyebrows and shrug their shoulders—but a perfectly quiet and decorous one, which no one would suspect and which would begin with perfect regularity every morning when we woke and finish with the same regularity when we went to sleep again at night.

Better then, better a thousand times a girl with a passion for Greek, or cricket, or slums, or school-treats than a girl incapable of any passion at all ! But we feel we are losing our characteristic calmness, and the critical voice of one of us inquires if there is no sort of young lady of whom we approve. We find on reflection that though we do not altogether care for these classes of girls, yet there are many individuals in all the classes whom we are an immeasurable distance from disliking. And there *is* a girl who belongs to none of the classes and yet has appropriated the virtues of them all—a girl. . . . But our net income is barely £200 per annum, and we do not feel justified in saying any more at present.



ON
SUNDAY MORNING

"Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip."

THERE is something that makes us feel quite different on Sunday morning. It is not clean clothes: it is not the fact that we have had time to get wetter and subsequently dryer: it is not breakfast at nine o'clock (nominal) instead of half-past eight (nominal). It is not that we find time to consume a few more rashers of bacon (Mrs. Robbem is unrivalled at a rasher), a few more cups of coffee, a few more rolls. It is not that we smoke the post-prandial pipe in an armchair

instead of in the streets. It is not that certain printing presses we wot of are silent. It is none of these things.

Possibly—*just* possibly—it is that our minds are fixed on higher things ; but our Aunt Eliza does not hold by this theory. We asked her.

It seems to us that the sun rises from his eastern couch—which symbol is borrowed from a poem we once wrote—in a different frame of mind on Sunday. He gets up rubbing his hands and smiling all over his jolly countenance.

“Ah!” he sighs, “Sunday. Lie in bed ye sluggards, for it is good that men should cease from their labours for a while. Sleep on, ye tired toilers—to-day there is no work for you to do! But I must be about my business ; I must shine down upon the peaceful country, melting the quiet mists of night, drawing up the blue smoke of the cotter’s fire. I must glance into city windows, and cheer the plucky little town-bred sparrow. Sleep on in town and village! Leave me to clean up the dust and refuse of the week!”

This is what the sun says to us on Sunday morning.

On other days the tenor of his observations is quite different.

"Turn out," he cries, "scramble into your bath and scramble out again. Scurry through your breakfast and cram a hat upon your busy brain. There is that brief awaiting you, and you know that your learned brother for the plaintiff has a better case than yours. The grimy engineer is boiling up his water in that basement in Fleet Street; at times he jerks a handle and sets things going just to make sure that they will work. The compositor moistens his fingers at his lips after the manner of compositors. The insatiable Press is waiting for you. Get up and write, be funny or pathetic as the emergency may demand, be very keen and very bright, for if you tire you will be thrown aside. There are many behind you, waiting for your shoes!"

So speaks he on week-days.

We want to know what it is that makes Sunday quite a different morning to Monday. Why do the city streets look cleaner? Why, in the peaceful country, do the trees look so still and thoughtful? We have put the question to some of our acquaintances—brilliant fellows who can and do (to their own

satisfaction) prove in four pages of a magazine that the earth created itself and all that therein is ; and they cannot give us a satisfactory reply.

We want to know why that sparrow—a sparrow we have known for years, who lives between the chimney pots of No. 5—we want to know why he contorts himself to pull out his withered feathers on Sunday morning and not on any other day in the week. We want to know why we are so fond of each other on Sunday morning, and pass each other the jam, and vow that we never eat more than two kidneys for breakfast when Mrs. Robbem happens to send up five.

We do not want to be dragged into a theological controversy, for we know nothing of such matters, but we should like one of the kind gentlemen who explain to us, in monthly parts, how we all came into existence without the aid of a Creator, to answer these simple questions to our satisfaction.

When we are dressed in our best, and walk abroad on Sunday morning, how pleasantly the passers-by look at us. They seem such good, Christian people, that we are almost tempted to borrow money from them. How good we feel, too, when the bells begin to ring !

The sound of a church bell in the streets is much better than the chime of a country belfry. The bell seems to have something to say to city folk which the country people know already. Something about Peace, we think it is, and Charity and Brotherly Love ; but we do not quite know, because we are hard-headed sons of the nineteenth century, without poetry in our souls, and the bells do not speak very distinctly ; their tones are a trifle muffled to our ears.

Yet we know a good deal about bells. In our time we have heard many of them. We have stood at the base of the tower of Ivan the Terrible, under the immediate eye of five Muscovite policemen, listening to the voice of the great bell of Moscow—not the greatest, for he is broken and dumb ; but the second, and the greatest having speech, in the world. We have, with our own hand, tolled the knell of a dead shipmate on the ship's bell, far away on the lone waters of the Antarctic Ocean. We have strained our ears for the sound of a bell-buoy in the misty Baltic ; we have stood in the gardens of the Vatican, listening to the voice of St. Peter ; we have smiled at the thin-toned tocsins of far Cathay, at the short-toned gongs

of Ind, and we have been aroused by the chapel-bell of several great monasteries.

And none of these have so much to say for themselves as the slow ding-dong of a brick-built church in a London street on Sunday morning.



ON MEALS

*"The larcin of the soul—the
dinner bell!"*

WE like meals. We are not in the least greedy. By no means. But we do not despise dinner, and confess to feeling some slight annoyance when Mrs. Robbem sends up our coffee tepid and our bacon smutty.

We own that our literary labour—though so ethereal and spiritual an occupation—is distinctly conducive to hunger, and—though we record it with shame—we cannot but remember that we rose from

the particularly harrowing deathbed of the particularly thrilling heroine of our latest novel with a fine and vigorous appetite even for the homely mutton, which that day furnished our lowly board.

One of us has been in love several times, but the other has never observed that the most ardent of these passions has made any perceptible difference in the weekly bills.

We have travelled abroad with economical friends who declare the air feeds them, and with soulful ones who live on the loveliness of the scenery, but personally we have never found the air satisfying, and are very careful before starting on an expedition to arrange with our ethereal companions exactly how, when, and where we are to have our meals. We prefer (though we do not like to say so—people would think us so greedy) to stay in a comfortable hotel in an ordinarily pretty place to starving in a romantic spot, even though the surrounding mountains may be two or three feet higher than any one else's mountains.

Still, we protest that we are not like some of our friends—who, however, appear to enjoy life quite as much as any of their fellow-mortals—and who may be said to date everything from dinner. We do not

mean to insinuate for a moment that they eat too much, only that they talk too much about eating. Some of them, certainly, are so philanthropic as to take an interest in their cook as keen, if not keener, than they take in their wives and families, and we constantly meet ladies whose intelligence is entirely consumed in those little dinners for which they are so justly famous, and who use so much astuteness in carving a chicken so that it may "go round" a whole tableful of hungry people, as to make it unreasonable to expect them to show brightness in any other relation of life.

We venture to think—though we do not set up for being scientists—that devolution from mind to matter is of common and every-day occurrence. We know gentlemen who have passed by an easy and rapid transition from an intense devotion to literature to a much more intense devotion to dinner. We have personal friends who once loved a great deal too much to eat, and who now eat a great deal too much to love. Every one has watched the decline of girls, beneath whose daintiness and prettiness a confiding youth might well be forgiven for expecting some kind of heart—if not an attempt at a mind—into most

excellent cook-housekeepers. But we are, perhaps, too expectant. What can it matter after all if a man's wife can give him really elegant little dinners, that she should be too stupid to talk to the guests on either side of her, and bad-tempered and scolding when they are gone? It is a matter of history that mental and sentimental worries seldom kill, while bad cooking destroys human life like the plague. Therefore it is manifestly impossible to over-estimate the importance of meals.



ON HEART

"Feeling is deep and still."

THERE was a time, we think, when people exhibited more heart than they do at present. We do not say that they had more heart, but that with what they did have they made more show, and set it out to much greater advantage.

They may not have bedewed their nightly pillow with many tears—they were a long-lived generation and so probably slept well—but during the daytime and in public they made a far larger capital out of their emotions than any one can manage nowadays.

They have indeed their modern representatives, but these representatives form exceptions to the general rule. Still, we do occasionally meet ladies who can sob, with equal ease and heartrendingness, on the death of their dearest friend or some one else's cat, and who can pour out quite a torrent of grief on hearing of the perfectly just, right, and natural demise of the aged gentleman in the next house but one, to whom they have never even spoken. We have always envied such persons, and have sat conscience-stricken in the presence of their affliction, trying vainly to summon a little moisture into our eyes, or, at least, a gentle melancholy into our expression. There are still ladies, beyond the age of school-girls, who embrace each other more often and with more warmth than social usage positively demands, and who have always a stock of perfectly appropriate adjectives ready for an emergency, whether of joy or sorrow.

Some gentlemen still retain the invaluable faculty

of being able to look sympathetic on any occasion, and of compiling letters of congratulation or condolence, which, if they had only been written in time, might have served as models for Chesterfield.

Persons of both sexes may every now and then be seen weeping gently but unrestrainedly over novels, and at a theatrical tragedy a great many of the audience seem to consider tears as incumbent on them as evening dress.

Couples who are engaged to each other of their own will—and a little in opposition to some one else's—are apt to show their feelings with a candour which we think should be suppressed by law.

But nowadays, rather than people who show too much of their heart, we find people who have none to show. And what condition, after all, can be more comfortable? We protest these persons are more to be envied than any in the world. The often-quoted happiness of virtue finds no place beside the happiness of heartlessness. It is, indeed, possible to unite the two. We know pious persons, who, if all their relations were engulfed at once in a whirlpool, would contentedly fold their hands and talk about the dispensations of Providence.

We have seen young gentlemen who would never commit the imprudence of being agitated by a single emotion for any other human being, and who "fall in love" because a little feminine adoration and a handsome wife will add to their own sense of importance.

We once had the pleasure of the acquaintance of a very pretty young lady who had managed every incident in her life, from childhood upwards, without allowing herself to be in the slightest degree biassed by such an exceedingly unpractical thing as a feeling. Her calm eye needed no motherly direction to fix itself upon an excellent young man (she argued with perfect reason that so good a son was certain to be as good a husband) of irreproachable antecedents and a very tidy income. She did not believe, which was really very right and proper of her, in love in a cottage, and expressed her opinions on the point quite openly. She left her father's house—in which we suppose she had received a very decent amount of care and affection—as lightheartedly as if she had been merely going for a walk round the garden. Her mother, an obese person sobbing asthmatically, must have felt quite reproached by her daughter's admirable calmness.

We hear that the young lady is a model wife, that her husband's socks are better mended than any man's in town, and that his shirts never want a button. Their children have all died in infancy—as, indeed, children are very apt to do. Their mother looks quite as youthful as when she was married, and is as gay and careless as on her wedding morning. We think that it is not merely a pious commonplace to say that those babies are better off where they are.

But it is most common, not to have too much heart or none at all, but a little. And the medium is a very happy one. It is convenient to be able to exhibit an irreproachable amount of genuine emotion, and to feel really acutely for five minutes. We need not, perhaps, distress ourselves quite as much as we do, when we part from our wife, torn by convulsive sobs on her way to stay at a country-house (to pay which visit, by-the-by, she has been moving heaven and earth for the past month). It is highly probable that she has not been ten minutes on her journey before her whole soul is engrossed in a mental contemplation of her dinner dresses, and it is morally certain that she will not have been more than half an hour in that country-house before she will have decided that it is

the most delightful place in the world, and have paid a final tribute to the memory of dearest John by a weak and solitary wish that he could be there too.

Neither need our self-reproaches be so particularly poignant when we go for a fishing excursion with a friend, and leave six heart-broken relatives weeping on our front doorsteps. Time will do much to heal their sorrows—nay, it is likely that a short time will do everything.

We travelled the other day in the same railway carriage with an exceedingly pretty French bride. She parted from her husband with the most genuine sobs we ever heard, and for fully two minutes after the train had departed wiped large unmistakable tears from her eyes with the prettiest lace pocket-handkerchief. Then she shook out her skirts, put away the handkerchief, arranged her veil, and composed herself to a lunch of two sausage-rolls, six *paté-de-foie-gras* sandwiches, and an unlimited number of chocolate creams.

Persons of dispositions so accommodating are very numerous. Though the cold knives of disappointment, loss, or betrayal may inflict flesh wounds, painful and bleeding profusely, but healing quickly,

they are proof against the deep heart-thrusts which poison life at its source, and are cured by—death. For our own part, when we take a final leave of our friends, we shall not care to be mourned passionately—for a week. We should prefer—it is as well to state our wishes early—to be an abiding memory in some faithful heart, a memory which no time or circumstance can ever shadow—to be loved, not tempestuously and briefly, but infinitely and for ever.



ON SLEEP

"Oh, where shall rest be found?"

WE are of the opinion that sleep will soon be numbered with the useless antiquities of the past.

Not being of an inventive turn, we cannot say exactly how this will be done, but we should think that, somehow, some one will arise with a plan for injecting lymph by means of which we shall be able to dispense with rest for ever.

We suppose that the extra hours of activity will be employed in acquiring—fragments—of new knowledge. If we once momentarily indulged in the wild hope that they might be given to acquiring some sort

of thoroughness in branches of learning already open to us, we have long since abandoned the idea as unfeasible, and also as unfair to our generation. We are afraid that when this non-sleeping system comes into vogue, a large number of persons will be altogether thrown out of employment. Even in this active age we have many friends who spend their whole lives in a sort of torpor from which they rouse themselves, temporarily, for meals. They take some slight interest in their complaints, which must relieve the general monotony of things, but as for having regard for any other persons or person, it would, of course, be unreasonable to expect sleepers so sound even to know what is going on around them. Maiden ladies of uncertain age, and a sufficient income to ensure idleness, are often of this torpid disposition. No one, we suppose, would be so rude as to say that they were selfish. On the other hand, they are generally given to a little charitable knitting, a fortnightly working party, and a prayer-meeting for Zenanas—all of which occupations are, we are told, if taken in a proper spirit, intensely soothing.

It is the immense privilege of these chronic sleepers to be perpetually dreaming that they are extraordinarily

active—almost more active in fact than is quite good for their health—so that without any trouble they have that self-satisfaction which is the peculiar portion of the virtuous.

But we believe that it is a more general, and more serious, mistake to be *too* active, bodily. Every one knows people—we trust earnestly every one does not know so many as we do—who snatch sleep in trains and omnibuses, hurriedly, in the pauses of life—who rob others of rest but who never appropriate any for themselves. These people, if they had time to be metaphorical, which they have not, would compare life to a race. They tear through it at a speed distressing to their friends, and, we really hope, at times a little distressing to themselves. They are to be met with in large numbers in Continental hotels. They spend their days in rushing madly up mountains and down ravines, in viewing sunrises when they ought to be asleep in bed, and sunsets when they ought to be asleep before the fire. They tell off the number of churches, ruins, and picture-galleries they have “done” in a single day, as if these were so many “head.” Their knowledge of these objects of interest is so exceedingly small, or in such

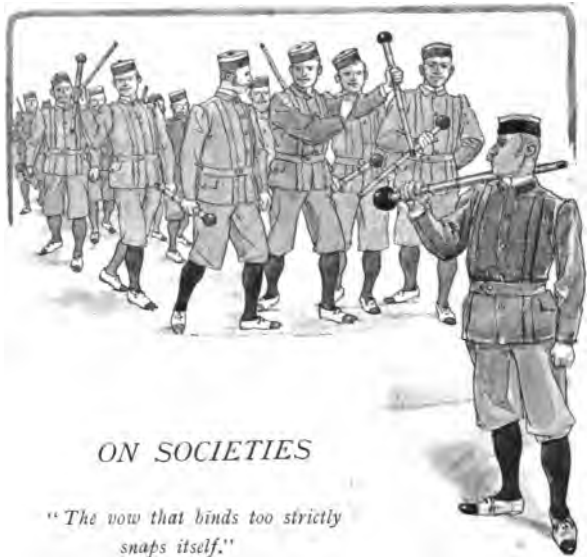
a condition of excited jumble as to make one fear that their object has not been so much to see them as to be able to *say* they have seen them.

It is also to be feared, indeed, that the minds of these bodily active people are, in all directions, occasionally apt to be slothful. The only time they really consider themselves justified in taking a little doze is when, through an absolute dearth of what they would call "anything to do," they are forced into solitude and literature. We have seen them in a beautiful sleep over really a very intelligent book, and when they wake up, looking over the top of it and thinking, quite deeply, of the excursions they will take to-morrow, and the next day and the day after that. We are afraid that the past never affords them any food for reflection, and so far from the book of nature, or that vaster book of human nature presenting ideas, or suggesting interests which will last through the forced inactivity of old age, we think that period of their lives will present as gloomy a tragedy as any we have seen.

For ourselves, though no one reading this book will suspect our minds of being anything but extraordinarily active—yet we confess to thinking sleep one of the

happiest of ancient institutions, and repose the deepest blessedness that we can enjoy. Is there any one who can say truthfully (Annanias and Sapphira avow it frequently) that they like getting up in the morning? Does any one know a more delightful sensation than the semi-consciousness between sleeping and waking? It is then we dream those dreams which will not live in the vulgar glare of noonday—which are too sacred to herd with the hard, practical money-making thoughts of the daytime. It is then only that we dare to dream dreams which we know, alas! can never be realities.

And for repose? Perhaps we approach nearest to it in those dreams. It is then we think of a home—a dream home, but real to us—in which there is a quietness of which the hurrying world outside knows nothing, and that deep rest and content which is found in a single faithful heart.



ON SOCIETIES

*"The vow that binds too strictly
snaps itself."*

WE are not speaking of Society in the singular—not because we do not feel competent, if we choose, to hurl anathemas at its devoted head, with the best of its fashionable censurers—but because we are getting a little tired of hearing it abused and wish to strike out an original line of our own, and publicly speak our mind upon Societies.

Though simple, humble-minded men, always ready to be instructed by our betters, we must confess it has

occasionally occurred to us to inquire if it is really impossible for any individual man, to do any individual deed, without joining a Society of other individuals for the purpose?

We can certainly understand that it would be dull for any man, by himself, to convey tracts and trousers to black persons in—Masai-land, shall we say? or some other remote region of the same sort, and we also readily perceive that it must take a very strong Society indeed to persuade even one man, of whatsoever complexion, to embrace a faith which necessarily involves broadcloth garments, in a country where the thermometer is stationary at about two thousand.

Nor do we cavil at Total Abstinence or Vegetarian Societies, because there is no doubt that it is safer and better for the world that its unmitigated idiots should be marked and set apart for instant recognition.

But we do not yet quite see why, for instance, persons who wish to be friendly with each other—and we are sure the intention is a most laudable one—cannot be so without joining a Society for the purpose.

We have managed to form companionships with numbers of perfectly model young men without paying a Society two-and-sixpence a year (exclusive of fines)

for doing so. And we are at a loss to imagine why any one should pay for what they can get just as easily without payment. Besides we have often wondered if our friendly acquaintances (though all, we repeat, are perfectly discreet and respectable)—if, in fact, any one's friendly acquaintances are worth two-and-sixpence a year to them?

As to the *raison d'être* (our French is extremely select) of such Societies as the Early Rising, the Modest Dressing, the Kind Courtesies, the Serious Reading, the Spare Half-Minutes, the Doughty Deeds, and the Temperate Meals, our mind is better informed. We were, in fact, once persuaded to join them, though in order to do so we had occasionally to suppress our sex. The chief desire of each seemed to be that the members should send one shilling yearly to a Miss Brown, or a Miss Smith, as the case might be, who had invariably chosen her residence at Buenos Ayres or Madagascar, or some other equally inaccessible place, to which it was perfectly impossible for any one to go and see what became of those shillings.

A foot-note at the bottom of the card containing the Society's rules invariably said that at the end of the year all these shillings—added to the fines of the

honourable—were divided into prizes to be had on application to Miss Brown or Miss Smith, accompanied by an affidavit that the member had never transgressed any of the Society's commands.

The bitter and worldly taint with which the air of Wisdom Court has infected us, caused us at first to fear that many persons might purport to have kept the rules without really having done so.

But the suspicion was surely unworthy, for who, as we afterwards asked each other, would have the heart to disappoint the confiding trust of a Brown of Buenos Ayres or to cheat the simple faith of a Smith of Madagascar?

We cannot honestly say—though we wish we were able to—that we ever derived any benefit from the Early Rising Society. The first rule was: Rise daily at six A.M., fine 4*d.*, which, if we had kept, we should no doubt be now begging our way, on foot, to Buenos Ayres to sob out our thanks for the redemption of our career at the feet of the enterprising Miss Brown. But, as we said, would not any one (except fools, for whom perhaps the Society was made)—would not any one infinitely prefer to pay not fourpence, but four shillings, nay, four pounds per morning, rather

than rise at six A.M.? Anybody who takes a prize from that Society is, we think, simply rejoicing in the results of the protracted anguish of wretched fellow-creatures, and the only consolation we have is that if he has gained his reward fairly he must have endured the same unthinkable tortures himself.

The Modest Dressing Society's chief aim seemed to be to prevent us becoming Skirt Dancers, and suggested in a foot-note that if we were in domestic service, ostrich feathers only came short of a sin.

Kind Courtesies required us—so we understood the rules—to run about the streets all our waking moments guiding blind gentlemen over crossings, carrying the parcels (above a certain weight) of elderly women (above a certain size), drying the tears of distressed infancy, and taking a seat in the omnibus with the express purpose of giving it up to some one else.

If we had had time, and had not been so much engaged in earning a livelihood, we think there is no doubt we should have won the Kind Courtesies prize, but no one except a gentleman with a private income

to pay the shilling for the privilege of being so polite, and to support himself, could possibly accomplish this triumph.

The Serious Reading wanted two-and-sixpence per annum, for allowing us to peruse Locke "On the Human Understanding" for four hours daily, so we sent it five shillings to go away.

The Spare Half-Minutes did not much fascinate us, but we very earnestly recommend Doughty Deeds as an incentive to a valour before which Launcelot's would blush.

Only half a crown a year is charged for allowing any one, man, woman, or child (no extra charge made for youth and strength) to plunge into burning houses, rushing torrents, down immeasurable glaciers, and up inaccessible mountains with a view—vague, perhaps, but no matter—of saving somebody or something. With an unprecedented generosity the Society awards its prize—amounting, we are told, to quite nine-and-sixpence—to any one who has attempted such rescues, though in vain, provided he has a few limbs broken (legs, or arms, or something of that kind) as a token of good faith.

The Temperate Meals forbids entrées and a super-

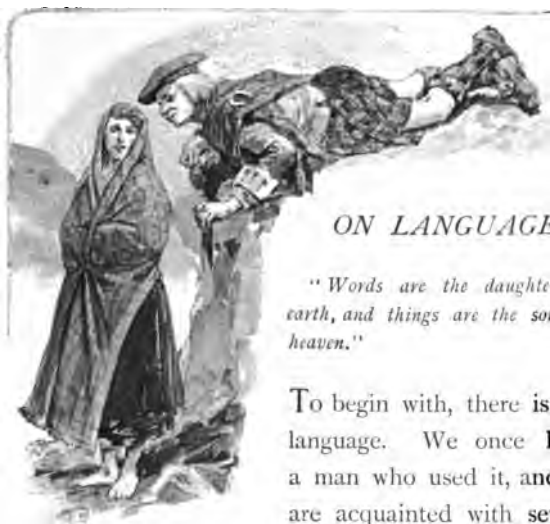
fluity of courses at the modest and customary charge of one shilling.

Our chief objection—nay, our only *real* objection to these estimable and carefully thought-out Societies—is the subscription. We are quite willing to own that it is good for us to be made uncomfortable, that it is bracing for the mind to be perpetually rubbed up by insane and impossible rules, and that if we were left to our own unaided intelligence we should be a great deal more idle—on the principle that many idiots can accomplish more idiocy than one idiot—but we object to paying.

We think that Miss Brown and Miss Smith should pay *us*. Our charges would not be unfair.

For twelve-and-sixpence an hour we would Seriously Read anything—even Locke.

For one guinea only we would be Kindly Courteous and carry the stoutest person's stoutest parcel up and down Regent Street. And for an annual income of not less than one thousand pounds we would Early Rise even in winter. Can we say more? If Buenos Ayres and Madagascar will not accept our terms we shall be forced to spread ourselves out into an Anti-Society Society and live peacefully ever after.



ON LANGUAGE

"Words are the daughters of earth, and things are the sons of heaven."

To begin with, there is bad language. We once knew a man who used it, and we are acquainted with several girls who do the same. This last is, perhaps, a sign of the times. We will not go into details because it is a painful subject, and one upon which we feel ourselves incompetent to offer any valuable opinion. We have always been our mother's pride, and mothers' prides do not swear. This is a hard-and-fast rule which altereth not, although it may be modified. We have suspected some mothers' prides of swearing, when occasion offered, beneath their breath. We believe they made use of some of those elaborately

finished American curse-words which are said to leave a taste of sulphur upon the tongue. We have seen them smacking their lips surreptitiously with a relieved look, as if some weight had just been removed from their souls.

There are others again who take an ordinary exclamation, such as the word "Bother," and, without the aid of Mrs. Beeton, dress it with the capsicum of warm intention, serving it up with such unction and emphasis that to all intents and purposes it is a curse both loud and deep.

On the other hand, we have met gentlemen who make use of a small monosyllable usually understood to hold water, with such grace and nonchalance that it really is pleasant to the ear. It serves to emphasise in a cheery manner certain conversational points, and sometimes it strikes us as almost witty.

Speaking only of those periods of existence when our female relatives are absent, we almost think that the society of the gentlemen who make use of bad language is preferable to that of such as expound what they are pleased to call good English. No mention need be made of the ladies who are guilty in this respect, because they are so rare. We have not

indeed had the pleasure of conversing with one—not twice at all events. Ladies as a rule—bless them—do not disseminate that English which is usually looked upon as the exclusive property of Her Gracious Majesty. Parsons, it must be confessed, endeavour most reprehensively to do so. They pay too much attention to punctuation. One can distinguish the colons, while most of us only know the full stop in conversation—except indeed certain of our friends, who, as we have hinted, love a dash. The fair sex is, of course, again excepted. We have known some ladies who never make a stop.

In parsons there is a suggestion of divisions and sub-divisions; of three headings and a conclusion: the periods are too long, and the language is too carefully chosen.

One of us had the honour of being left by the ladies the other evening, at a heavy dinner, at the wrong end of the table, alone with an elderly parson; so we speak feelingly. The old gentleman kept the decanter on his right hand while the victim sat on his left; that was the worst of it. He emphasised the points and headings of his discourse with a friendly tap on the decanter stopper, and ran his hand up and

down the stem of it as we had had the misfortune to see him run up and down the pulpit candle-stem. Having other things to think about, his listener allowed him to go on, and the rounded periods rolled out uninterruptedly until the host made a move. We imagine the old gentleman was under the impression that he was displaying considerable brilliancy as a conversationalist.

One often hears persons described as possessing an enormous command of language. This, being translated, means that they have remarkable little control over their tongues. People who deal largely in words transact a very small business in sense, we have discovered. Moreover, if the command of language be given to a man of a low station in life it usually gets him into trouble, for his tongue runs away with him, and a policeman runs after him and catches him. If it be given to his wife, the result usually lies somewhere between manslaughter with extenuating circumstances and wilful murder without.

We have noticed that persons possessing a command over *several* languages are rather less powerful than their ungifted brethren. In the larger field thus opened to them they display an even smaller dis-

cretion. As to the manner in which they air their accomplishments, they show no discretion whatever.

It is always well to remember that if one speaks five languages, there are probably four people in the room who speak one each of them considerably better. We once knew an old gentleman reputed to speak no less than seven tongues, but we can testify that the only language we heard him speak respectably was that which he had learnt from his mother. It was also rumoured that he possessed deep knowledge of the dead languages, but these we took good care to avoid.

In our early youth—now, alas! long past—we resuscitated, in a partial and unsatisfactory manner, some of these departed tongues, but the experiment was not highly successful. The patients succumbed to exhaustion, and are now deader than ever. It took us some years to acquire these languages, some months to forget them thoroughly, and we have been wondering ever since what subtle benefit we derived from the temporary knowledge. Once, indeed, we did speak Latin to the Brother Superior of a Greek Monastery. We did not tell him about the hostages who were without the gate of the city, or any startling information of that kind. We merely asked him if we could have

something to eat because we were hungry. We got something to eat—something flavoured with garlic—and then we found out that the Brother Superior spoke English, and knew considerably more about the works of Mr. William Shakespeare than we did.

There is one other language which calls for treatment from a poetic pen like ours—the language of Love. We do not speak it ourselves, and no one has yet addressed us in the tongue. One of us indeed acquired the rudiments some years ago, but his studies were desultory. He never got into two-syllabled words, and certain compound expressions, such as “mother-in-law” and “income-tax,” so discouraged him that he finally abandoned the pursuit. Whatever we may venture to put forward must therefore be accepted as the impartial judgment of persons looking on from a respectful distance, and thus proverbially entitled to claim as profound a knowledge of the game as any one else. It is then our deep conviction that the best part of this language is its silence.



on Learning

*" Knowledge comes, but wisdom
lingers."*

It is possible that grave-minded and purposeful persons who have cast a superior and disapproving eye upon the other articles in this work, may cheer up a little at the above title,

and feel that they have lighted upon a congenial topic at last. We feel it our duty to tell them before they go any further that there will be nothing the least Baconian in this paper. Indeed we are convinced that if that functionary had lived in our day he would not have been so anxious for the advancement of learning as he was in the time of Elizabeth. On the contrary, we are certain he would think with us that

learning has advanced a great deal too far. If it proceeded with delicately considered steps we should not complain, but it tramps heedlessly along and sets its foot indiscriminately upon everybody.

There was, for example, something hideous—we had almost said immoral—in the tousle-headed girl who waited upon us in a lodging-house being conversant with the French tongue. We reflect, however, with some satisfaction, that her learning cannot have been an unmixed delight to her, since, when she was waiting upon us, we remember having indulged in many remarks upon her of a singularly unflattering description in that language. We could not help thinking, though we may have been wrong, that if she had not known French she would occasionally have brushed her hair, and we felt pretty certain that an ignorance of that tongue would have saved her, when we made a remark in it, from giggling inanely over the vegetable dishes.

Infant mortality has been, we feel certain, largely upon the increase since the British nursemaid has been educated up to the *Family Herald*, and we have been told, that for the sake of the dinner, it is better the cook should take to drink than to fiction.

But the ill-effects of promiscuous learning are not only patent in the lower orders. They have overwhelmed the fool of the family, who might otherwise have gone through life perfectly mild, amiable, and inoffensive, affable even at a garden party, and invaluable at afternoon tea. But while the old-fashioned fool would have been struggling manfully with his Little-go, the modern fool decides that he has a mind above exams., so he becomes an apostle of culture, and acquires what he calls the Higher Learning. He studies, and finds out that he has a mission—to reform men's morals or their neckties. Sometimes he is to be found slumming picturesquely in the East End, where he fasts a little, poses a great deal, and makes himself an unmitigated nuisance to every one.

But, upon the whole, injudicious scholarship has a worse effect upon the gentler, than upon the sterner sex. Ladies, as a rule, take the complaint in such a virulent form that very small hopes can be entertained of their recovery. If it were a mania which had lucid intervals, we should be more sanguine regarding their case. But who has ever met a learned lady who can, even momentarily, be oblivious of her learning? It weighs upon her oppressively from morning till night.

It pulverises her manners, it crushes her amiability, and has an effect truly disastrous upon her personal appearance.

We do not understand the principle upon which Greek roots swallow the complexion, but we have observed that they invariably do so. Nor do we know why a hankering after geometry should always go hand in hand with a taste in dress which makes the head sick and the heart faint. We have never been able to trace the connection between a proficiency in political economy and a proficiency in crushingness of manner, but we know (by experience) that in the lady-like mind the bond between the two is as the bond between husband and wife—unbreakable.

We do not see why because a young lady has learnt everything else she should not also learn to make herself agreeable, nor do we comprehend the reason why a person who has grappled with all the arts not dare even to attempt artlessness and should modesty. But a long practical experience has taught us that these things are not and, apparently, cannot be.

Rude persons have suggested that the lady-like mind has over-estimated its own depth, and has filled itself fuller than it will hold, the overflowings thereof being

vanity and self-conceit. They have also remarked that there is a vast difference between learning a thing and knowing it, and that many gifted ladies might be described as learning too much and knowing too little.

Personally we have never given ear to these cavillers. We ourselves know a learned young lady, and have derived the greatest benefit from her society. For she has no nasty pride, and will bestow information upon the lowest worm amongst us. She has given us so much instruction upon legal matters that we feel it was a sad waste of time and money to keep terms at the University, studying the subject, when we might have obtained the same knowledge gratis from her. She has disproved numberless little fallacies which were imparted to us at that seat of learning. She has shaken our most cherished beliefs at their foundation, and we have yielded the creed of a lifetime, with a nervous smile, to the most illogical of her arguments.

Everybody must own that she is a girl of very powerful mind.

To the future of Learning, we should, if it directly concerned us, look forward with a sigh. But it is comforting to reflect that we shall be fertilising some

grassy mound before the time when all men will be mentally equal. We cannot feel too grateful that we live in an age when there is still a little comfortable ignorance about. Thanks to this ignorance we now, not infrequently, go to dinner-parties where we are considered witty, or wise, or both, and go home refreshed and invigorated in spirit. We are modest men, and are perfectly aware that if every one had received the Higher Learning, we should, most probably, produce an opposite effect upon our fellow-diners, and return home world-weary and discomfited. But how much pleasanter is it to meet with honest persons of uncultured understanding—nay, how necessary is it for the happiness of society that such persons should be encouraged!

What, for instance, would become of our Papa—the Papa of one of us—if learning was sown broadcast in his innocent and happy parish? What would become of him, if the farmers, instead of sleeping beautifully through the sermon, were to wake up and discover flaws in his dear old threadbare arguments, and the village cronies were to pounce upon him for unsoundness of doctrine?

How much better is it, that since none of us can

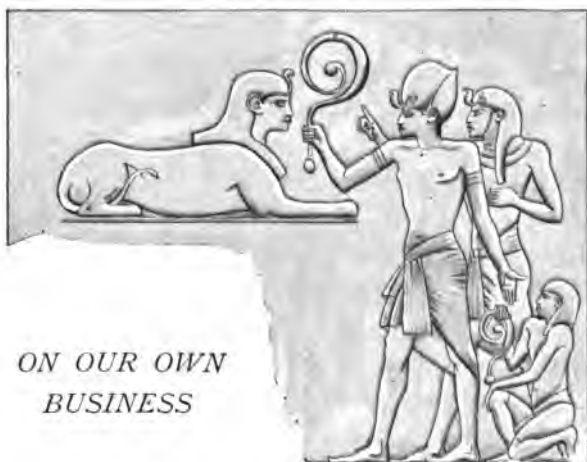
be infallible, some of us should at least be considered so ! How it adds to the grace and sweetness of existence that the most ignorant and unlettered among us should possess some tender relation, or faithful servant, a little more ignorant and unlettered still, to whom we are the most brilliant and accomplished person in the world !

Finally, we totally disapprove of Free Education, and regard the Board School and schemes for the Higher Erudition of the Masses with a nervous shudder.

We think it highly undesirable that everybody should know everything, and prophesy that when this state of things arrives it will be found extremely uncomfortable.

But, when it does, let no one blame us.

In the teeth of that huge monster, a rapidly advancing Learning, we throw this article.



ON OUR OWN
BUSINESS

"Un homme sage ni ne se laisse gouverner ni ne cherche à gouverner les autres."

FOR years we scorned the precedent set by that mistaken reptile, the worm.

"No," we said, "turning may suit the worm, but it is not our way of doing things. We have been well brought up. We have, we trust, profited by those lessons of Christian forbearance preached—but not practised—by our excellent parents, before we grew up to man's estate and saw through them."

So when Aunt Eliza wrote to us from Cornwall, and

said she had found a cook for us, we only smiled in a feeble way, and sat heavily down. The young person in question, she went on to tell us, was the orphan of a fisherman whose misfortunes drove him to drink and a delirium tremens grave. Chiefest of his troubles, it would appear, had been his wife, in whose veins ran a blood hopelessly tainted by that malady euphoniously called kleptomania. Her career of stealing brought her to the resort of her fellow-sufferers, where she finally stole a march on the recording angel and died of pneumonia. All this, Aunt Eliza informed us, had naturally had a bad effect on the spirits of the woman who was to be our cook—but she had no doubt that in a cheerful household (she understood that the Temple was quiet and yet in a cheery centre) the buoyancy of youth would re-assert itself.

“It doesn’t re-assert itself in this house,” said one of us, with a hastiness that was to be deplored.

“Now,” said the other, “do keep calm. This is one of those dangers which are only to be met with a perfect *sang-froid*!”

To begin with we did not want a cook. What, we ask in the name of domesticity, were two men in rooms in the Temple to do with a cook? There is no

such thing in Wisdom Court as a cook. We know that for certain, because we have had meals in every house except No. 7, and the men there prefer doing their own cooking—on a paraffin stove. They explain nothing. They offer no details ; they say they prefer it—that is all.

Aunt Eliza, it appeared, had heard through some indiscreet mutual relative that we had established a modest vine and fig-tree in Wisdom Court. In the absence of detail she presumed that we wanted a cook, and with that species of unselfishness which takes the form of thinking too much about others and reflecting too little, she had found one. Or rather, we keenly suspected, she had found us for the cook. The advantages were manifestly on the side of the bereaved one ; for Aunt Eliza did not, in the course of a rambling monograph, mention one single recommendation or detail from which we might gather that the orphan would have suited us in the remote contingency of our having the slightest use for her.

“I presume,” the good lady said, “that you have a temporary help of some sort—probably a charwoman. These women invariably drink. If you keep spirits in the house the state of the bottles from day to day will

give you sufficient excuse to give her a week's notice on the spot."

"Which spot?" we asked each other drearily. "*If* we keep spirits in the house—oh lor! A week's notice—good heavens!"

The idea of giving a week's notice to that capable woman at whose slipshod feet our inner men lay prone in helpless supplication was so original that it called up quite a merry smile.

We recognised at once that this was one of those crises in life where men must stand shoulder to shoulder. To carry out the metaphor we went farther, and put our heads together. We wrote a diplomatic letter—the first of many, and may they not be accounted to us for unrighteousness—and not only kept that promising cook away from the perils of the great city, but we retained Aunt Eliza's affection. She admitted that she was disappointed. The situation, she said, seemed so likely to suit the poor girl, but the perils of the great city did it. The phrase was the emanation of that brain of ours whose business it is to manufacture such and dazzle an easily dazzled public.

The above trifling incident in two blameless and troubled careers is mentioned because it bears directly

upon the views hereinafter expressed. It helped to form those views ; for we are not (as may perhaps be erroneously supposed by the reader) deep thinkers. We merely, like the French gentleman called Rousseau, "see the manners of our time, and we publish this letter."

It seems, therefore, to us that the excellent practice of minding one's own business is not cultivated with the assiduity that it deserves. Of course Aunt Eliza meant well. Such people invariably do. A bull in a china shop probably means well. He means to get out as expeditiously as circumstances will allow. He takes no delight in broken earthenware, and the clatter jars on his nerves. But the damage is nevertheless done. An excellent meaning mendeth no china.

The difficulty seems to be in that line which requires to be drawn somewhere or other in most human affairs. Wherever it be finally drawn there will be some one left on the hither side—one has to be reconciled to that ; and it is a doubtful question whether persons like Aunt Eliza feel so keenly as might be expected or perhaps desired.

We have given much consideration to the matter, and with all due deference venture to put forth the

theory that the Martyrs must have been gathered from the ranks of such people as our respected relative. There is nothing like conscious virtue for dulling the sensibilities. When we wrote the diplomatic letter above referred to we were keenly conscious of the fact that, put it how we might, Aunt Eliza was shown up by it in the semblance of an unmitigated fool. When we set forth in our best style the manner of life lived in Wisdom Court and the adjacent dwellings, it was as much as saying that the good lady had made a fool of herself. He who ran might read. Not so Aunt Eliza. After expressing some disappointment that we were not in a position to house the fatherless, she proceeded to give us her views as to the amelioration of life in Wisdom Court, and on the last page, which was crossed and which we did not read, we have reason to believe that she proved conclusively that the first step towards the higher life was the hiring of a cook.

We do not mind in the least being counselled to wear certain staples next to our persons. Such advice we invariably receive with a becoming gravity. To begin with, the counsellors will never have a chance of discovering what material we affect beneath our

shirt-fronts, and, secondly, they never expect that we should take the advice to heart. They merely give it in order that they may tell other old women that they have given it, with such and such a result. Moreover, such personal matters as these are kindly and human. One of us took unto himself a "back," some years ago, by lifting a garden-roller over a wall for a trifling bet of two shillings and sixpence. That back has been the means of his acquiring a huge popularity among certain kindly old ladies and gentlemen. Whenever he sees one or the other at an evening party or some other assemblage of idlers suffering visibly from boredom, he takes them into a corner and tells them about his back. He brings intelligence to bear upon the matter, and adapts his symptoms to the listeners' fancy or experience. If they have backs, or possess relatives bearing backs through this vale, his complaint is marvellously similar. Or if they have a leg, he has the same trouble—the identical trouble—in his back.

And so we reach the moral of our discourse, namely, that the greatest human pleasure within our power to bestow is a portion of our own affairs. Nor must this portion be given freely, but with reluctance

for this makes the illusion more illusive. Our neighbours do not want us to say :

“ Here—you manage this affair ; I have not time to give to it.”

They want us to go to them in dire distress, saying, humbly :

“ Please help me in the management of my own affairs. I have tried but I have not your experience of the world (if it be a man)—your discernment ” (to a woman).

The back mentioned is an excellent substitute for more serious matters, being intangible, inexhaustible, and conducive to neighbourly sympathy—but it has not always succeeded. We, like other men within and beyond the precincts of this Court, have had our troubles, and it is our deliberate opinion that nine-tenths of the same have emanated from the inability of some person to mind his or her own business. Unwarrantable interference on the part of relatives is accountable for three-fourths of family broils, and money is of course the motive of the remaining quarter.

Our relatives have not only found us a cook ; they have trespassed upon the higher rungs of the domestic

ladder, and have, more than once, endeavoured to find us a wife.

Here, as in Aunt Eliza's case, we turned not hastily as the worm, but with deliberation. We take it that the blessing mentioned will have more to do with our own lives than with the existence of any one of our friends or relations.

Whether the days of the Wisdom Court *ménage* are numbered—whether either or both of us knows where to look when the cook or the other person necessary to a new home is required—whether, indeed, we have already applied and negotiated, is, we beg to intimate, our own business.



ON PLEASURE

"Le bonheur n'est pas chose aisée ; il est très difficile de le trouver en nous, et impossible de le trouver ailleurs."

SHORT of looking on the wine when it was red we have tasted most of the so-called pleasures of life. Of some we have drunk deeply. We have got into a few and splashed about. And, low be it spoken, we have found that the habitual drunkard is the only man who remains faithful to his pastime. All other pleasures are a vanity and a vexation of spirit.

At school we collected almost everything that was worth collecting, excepting information. We had a very fine stamp album, with most of the stamps in the

wrong pages—a sort of album of Babel where tongues and countries clashed. This we exchanged for a box of hashed butterflies which in turn went for live-stock. Live-stock was perhaps the most satisfactory. Stag-beetles caused considerable amusement when let loose during class, and being animals of a low intellectual power, they did not know their own master and thus bring home the crime to the culprit. Silk-worms are distinctly lucrative. White mice have a fascination of their own. In due time we laid aside the playthings of youth and took upon us the gravity of men. This was about the time that we were admitted into the first eleven. At this period also we tasted of pleasure. It tasted of tobacco and all ended in smoke—the smoke of a furtive cigarette behind the cricket pavilion. But there was another happiness, one of the few over which we smack our lips to this day. The flavour of it has not faded yet. We mean the grim pleasure of the football field, where we learn to be beaten—the most useful of all lessons. Before we dipped into one inkstand we defended one goal, and the lesson we learnt there has, perhaps, something to do with the contentment that is ours in Wisdom Court while others live in Berkeley Square.

At the 'Varsity we ran the usual course. We did a little polo and a lot of walking up and down the High in top-boots and a long coat. We pulled a pretty oar, although we say it ourselves. We were almost allowed to wear a green coat and brass buttons because we wielded so doughty a tennis-racket. But all was vanity. We never quite reached that stage when a man gives up his body and his soul to pleasure.

Since the undergraduate days we have tried many things ; we have seen the world and mixed among our fellow-men. We have actually met individuals who sought pleasure before breakfast. It has been our lot to speak with men in the flesh who got up at six in the morning to play golf. Of course they were struck off our visiting list. We once went mountaineering to Switzerland, but that did not run into a second season. There was too much getting up the night before, stumbling up a steep incline in the dark, and turning back as soon as it was light because the weather was unpropitious. On off-days some of our party used to keep their hands in, as they put it, by climbing up to a glacier and getting their feet wet. They invariably started before it was light, and seemed to put on their heaviest boots as soon as they got out of

bed. Then they came to our door and knocked cheerfully.

"We are going for a scramble on the Rosegg," they would shout through the carefully locked door.

"Go and hang yourselves!" we replied encouragingly.

By way of complete variety we once went to sea. We were shipwrecked. That was really exciting while it lasted, except for the wet, of which there was a great deal; but there was no real pleasure in it. "Call this pleasure?" one of us asked the other, as we were being hauled face downward up a shingly beach. All that, however, is outside the question. The main aim of this work is to point out to our contemporaries that they take their pleasures too seriously. It seems that, nowadays, no pleasure is worth mentioning until it becomes a toil.

"What do you do?" one hears a girl ask of a new acquaintance—not "What do you do for a livelihood?" or "What do you do for the good of mankind?" But merely what does she do for her own amusement. How does she hold her own in the world of competing time-killers? And the answer is usually foreshadowed in the style of dress affected. Towzled hair and

gloveless hands, with a low-throated dress, and a certain wild-eyed absorption, whisper Art. That girl goes up by an early morning train, with a tin colour-box in her hand and an inadequate luncheon in her pocket, to some Art Gallery, where she makes an atrocious copy of a picture not worth copying. She is not a professional artist, and probably never hopes to be one; she does it for pleasure. A short dress trimmed with leather, accompanied by a long stride, hampered by an excess of the same commodity, denotes the female golfer. Here is a young woman who spends her mornings, noons, and evenings in acquiring the technicalities of a game admirably suited to old men but not to maidens. If she has the malady in a virulent form she takes lessons from a professional. One can picture the malicious smile of that professional when seated before his "ain hearth" in the evening. He is probably a Scotchman, and men of that race have no compunction in making money out of the foolishness of others. The female golfer plays a game, which would astonish St. Andrews, with clubs which would give that venerable city fits. But she calls it golf, and talks of it under that appellation from morning till night. Her soul is wrapped up in it. She lives

for it, dreams of it — and yet it is a game; a pleasure.

There is—unmuzzled and at liberty in the world—a class of young person with hair drawn from a rounded forehead as if by hydraulic pressure. She usually wears spectacles, and is so far above dress as to scorn anything approaching a frill or a fichu. To her more feminine sisters we would suggest, *en passant*, the consoling thought that if these young ladies did attend to fashion, they would effectually ruin any pretty novelty for the rest of the world by not knowing how to wear it. This is the literary maiden who reads a little, and talks a vast deal about that little in a high and authoritative voice.

“Of course,” we heard one of these young ladies say, “Blank is above the heads of the people. He is a great novelist. I have made a regular study of him. Unless you do that you cannot expect to understand him.”

This completely shut up her hearer, as it was intended to do. But it happened that he was the man who had written the books in question—under a pseudonym on account of the income-tax collector. We rather think that Blank, deep down in his own

silent heart, had the best of that. Now it is all very well, but reading novels is not a science—neither is it a study, and the young person who pulls back her hair and gives herself airs because she reads anything that Mr. Mudie gives her is making a fool of herself. Novels are written for money—we know, because we write them, and are open to orders—and novel-reading is supposed to be a pleasure and nothing else.

This unmanly attack on the fair sex does not signify the opinion that men take pleasure with more discretion. We illustrate our observations in the feminine gender because the picture must naturally be pleasanter of contemplation. Men are almost as bad. They take up a game, say football, and simply live for it. They get up and run a couple of miles before breakfast, and are naturally bearish during that meal. During the winter months they refrain from the sweets of this life because sugar is not good to run upon. We know all about it. We have done it ourselves.

We have photographed, too, in our time. We have struggled with the legs of a camera, in a gale of wind on an exposed sea-beach. We have chased our black velvet focussing cloth along the sea-shore for miles. We have taken instantaneous views of the mighty

billows with results that might have been Sunlight Soap washing the clothes by itself while the laundress went for a holiday. We have taken photographs of a fishing-boat, a ruined church, and a near relative, all on the same plate. We have, in the sacredness of our dark room, developed plates which had nothing on them. We once took a photograph of Aunt Eliza, and the good lady, seeing a print of the same, nearly placed her executorship elsewhere. We toiled at photography ; we read about it, and studied it ; and then we remembered that it was supposed to be a pleasure, and we sold the camera at a heavy loss.

In all sooth we are a strange generation. We cannot keep competition even out of our pastimes, and we grow grey-headed and weary over our pleasures.



ON OUR
BIRTHPLACE

*"Still must the man move sadder for the dreams
That mocked the boy."*

To avoid any confusion the above title might give rise to among those unborn generations to whom our names will be a household word, we hasten to say that though we shared, so to speak, the same Stratford-on-Avon, we are not related to each other, no, not so much as by a cousinship.

The uninitiated will perhaps suppose when they come down to our early haunts by excursion train, and count one shilling as nothing to see the houses

we inhabited, and half a crown as less for a single hair from our coatbrush, that our native land was after all nothing but a suburb. But there are, as our village was fond of saying, suburbs *and* suburbs.

Ours was a suburb of which the most sacrilegious would never have dared to impeach the aristocracy. *Some* persons' suburbs—nay, even individuals with whom we are personally acquainted—are defiled by rows of red-brick villas, with lace curtains and artificial flowers in the front window, and washing hanging in the back gardens.

Some persons' suburbs, we say, have nasty little rows of houses, overlooking their railway lines, from whose backyards unwashed children can shout, or wave at them familiarly on their way up to town. There are suburbs—we mention no names—which are the abode of the retired soap manufacturer or the fortunate porkbutcher. But our village had absolutely No Connection with any such. It is, or was, nothing if not aristocratic.

Both of us—we write it without undue exaltation—belong to County Families. We have been tempted to think that we might be more elated about the fact if it had been in the least lucrative. But the

real old County Families are never well off. A County Family with money was always regarded by us as more than doubtful, and filled our mamas with a nervous dread, lest they should be visiting persons who had had some connection, however remote, with a Prize Pickle or a Permanent Plaister.

The aristocracy are always, we believe, Tory to the backbone. Once our village had a Conservative meeting—only once, but it was a very good one indeed. The Radical party must have been too nervous to muster strongly on that occasion. Anyhow, they were only represented by a pale nursery-gardener, an imbecile youth of fifteen, and a Baptist elder with asthma. Some time before the speeches began, the Tory feeling grew so strong that the opposition were soundly hissed and then forcibly expelled from the room. And we had a very nice evening, and some most rousing and convincing speeches. Just lately our village has blossomed out into a Primrose League Branch. It is in a most flourishing condition. Hundreds of people belong to it. There are two large (meat) teas given to the members every year, fortnightly penny readings, and the sweetest badges presented free of charge—and we

returned a Radical member, unopposed, at the last General Election.

Our village was very intellectual when we lived in it. We may have been the cause ; we do not know. We should not like to deny the soft impeachment lightly. Anyhow, when we were there, Shakespeare Readings were given, which have fallen into disuse since we left. We did not take important parts in them. At least, we were not intended to ; but, from a lack of attention to the matter in hand, we had a habit of perpetually bursting in with other people's speeches, earning thereby withering glances from all sides of the room. But we have always maintained, and always shall, that it is very much easier to be—Orlando, shall we say, or Shylock ? than to be a watchman with three separate and, if we may so say, senseless sentences in three separate acts, or a soldier with one perfectly inane remark, just where one would least expect it. Human nature is too frail to enable one to bottle up "What ho, without !" for quite two hours, and then chime in with it exactly in the nick of time, somewhere at the end of the fifth act ; and we always confessed to being too weak to refrain from ejaculating "Marry, come up !" when-

ever there was a pause, or things seemed to be getting a little dull.

The favourite play was "Romeo and Juliet." The curate most kindly offered to take Romeo. As, of course, every one wished to be perfectly proper and give no occasion for scandal, and as he was a plain man of about fifty, with a much plainer wife, and thirteen unwholesome children at home, this was the most satisfactory arrangement which could be made. He used to sit on the extreme edge of his chair, look fixedly at his book, and read his part in the same fretfully corrective tones in which he reproached his wife on the third appearance of cold mutton, or inquired on Sundays why no one attended the week-day services.

The eldest district visitor was Juliet. She was unmarried, and many persons thought it was scarcely right that she should assume the part. But though we were as particular about the proprieties as nice-minded young men should be, we cannot say we ever saw any real harm in it ourselves, as the lady must certainly have been well over forty, with a large beaky nose, very little chin, and no silly sentimentality whatever.

Once there was a series of Amateur Concerts for the People. The chief, we may say the only, drawback to these concerts was that the People did not come. We should not like to believe of our simple poor, whom the lady-members of the county families had soup-kitchened and clothing-clubbed for years, that they were led away from the select evenings, by a vulgar and odoriferous menagerie at that time stationed in their midst, or that they preferred a Dissenting magic-lantern.

We remember often having remarked to each other that really good work improves by repetition. If this theory was correct, the duet played by the Rector's daughters must at last have risen to a pitch of melody and splendour absolutely unthinkable. They always opened the concerts with this duet, and though one of us has so unmusical an ear that he scarcely recognises "God save the Queen," he declares that the three opening crashes of "Zuleika"—the duet's name—will haunt him to the grave.

We did not think—we do not think now—that any other suburb could produce a linen-draper like ours. He recited the "Charge of Balaklava" at each of the Social Evenings—except one, when he had a cold in

his head—with such heart-bursting pathos that one of us, and sometimes both, had to be forcibly ejected from the back row in that state of helpless convulsion so often brought on by an over-indulgence in the tender emotions. As an encore he sometimes gave a selection from “*Enoch Arden*”—a poem where the hero’s very name seemed to have been especially invented to show what our reciter could do with the letter H when he liked. Then, of course, there was our Corney Grain. In every-day life he was an undertaker, and being a very right-minded and proper feeling man, he did not quite cast aside in his entertainment—as the light and thoughtless might have done, the seriousness and decorum so eminently suitable to his profession. We do not suppose for one moment that he wished any one to laugh at his little jests, for no one ever did, and he continued giving his entertainments, perfectly impassive and unmoved, week after week for the whole season.

We flatter ourselves that our village has always been very up to date with its charities. The poor are so hemmed in by societies that they can neither be born nor die—much less live through the interval between these events—without somebody else paying

every farthing of the attendant expenses. If any one is ill, his door is quite besieged by armies of the fair and pious, armed with grapes, hot-house flowers and half-crowns, and if he dies the competition is enormous as to who shall have the privilege of pensioning the widow.

It is now several years since we have seen our birthplace. It knows us no more. Perhaps it thinks it has cast us off. No matter. The time will yet come when our busts shall grace the village pump.



ON DOGS

*"There is one that keepeth
silence and is found wise."*

WHILE we write, our very best friend is lying on the hearthrug within the range of a kick. If we sigh the sigh of the unready writer, he lifts his ear and opens an eye that beams with a love surpassing the love of mankind. Every man, one may suppose, is ready to maintain that his own dog is more intelligent than all others of his kind. We are ready to do so, tooth and nail. One of us stands six foot one in his stocking-boots as the sporting gentlemen say. He was once a champion feather-weight, then a champion light-weight boxer; now he has developed into a heavy-

weight of the most pronounced type. All dog-stories must be sent under cover to him. He is the man who maintains the superiority of our dog.

If we want to please J. Cæsar we dig him in his respectable ribs and call him a bad lot. He edges off sideways with a deprecating smile as much as to say :

“Now don't chaff a fellow. I may have been a bit wild in my time. Perhaps I am a sad dog in my small way, but don't mention it before the pups.”

And he swaggers away with a cock of his left ear and a wink in his eye. As a matter of fact a staid and more respectable member of the canine race never cracked a biscuit. But like some of his so-called betters, it pleases J. Cæsar to assume the demeanour rakish outside the *bourgeois* heart. When he first came to live in Wisdom Court, J. Cæsar thought fit to kill two cats, a tame jackdaw belonging to the housekeeper of No. 5, and the pampered pet (built on the lines of a King Charles spaniel) of the wife of an eminent Q.C. whose carriage stood without the gates. The last named feat called forth all our *sang-froid*. One of us went into the Q.C.'s chambers and told him that excellent story about the

Bishop who poured gin into his whisky, while the other interviewed the Q.C.'s superior moiety without the gates. He told the good lady that the brute of a dog belonged to a man called Higgins—a person who was no gentleman at all—who was away; but that on his return we would combine duty with pleasure and attend the execution of the dog. In the meantime, if anything in the nature of a quiet wake would soothe her outraged feelings we were prepared to take the remains of her poor and darling pet with a view of decently burying same. The legal lady accepted the offer, and the chewed remains of the spaniel were borne reverently away. We delivered a post-mortem lecture to J. Cæsar over those remains—administered a post-mortem thrashing and buried the victim in the ash-box of a neighbour. We may mention to the credit of J. Cæsar that he never killed the dog again.

Then there was the difficulty with Police Constable B 42. We know without doubt that when of an evening the wind howls round the court and the fire-light leaping and falling casts strange shadows on the ceiling of our peaceful room—when, we say, under these circumstances Cæsar comes and, placing his

chin upon our knee, moans and whines his canine heart out—we know that he is trying to explain that little affair of Police Constable B 42. It came about in this wise. One evening about eight (the policeman's special hour) B 42 called and entirely filled up the passage. We begged him to come in and make himself quite at home. We were horribly frightened. What man, we ask, can look on a policeman without his helmet indoors and not feel the tug of fear at his heart. B 42 came in and we sapped the severity of the law with whisky administered in heroic doses. It was not long before B 42 produced from under his cape a hand—his own, the hand of the law—swathed in a clean blue-and-white pocket-handkerchief.

“About this ere dog—Gentlemen,” he said, setting aside the whisky and our blandishments “’e’s bit me badly.”

It transpired that B 42, in the execution of his duties, was forced to converse the previous evening with Mrs. Robbem's niece. We are susceptible male beings ourselves, and we did not press B 42 for further particulars respecting the business that took him down our area steps. He was doubtless acquiring that familiarity with the habits of his clients which

makes the difference between a competent and an incompetent police constable.

"Just as I was turning away, sir," he narrated, "the gal and I being interchangin' a little light had'nage, I sort o' raised my hand and the dorg fastened on it like a limpot."

Not being acquainted with the adhesive commodity named we contented ourselves with looking horror-struck. One of us whistled softly by inhaling the breath through the teeth.

"Five incisions, m'lud, I mean gentlemen," continued B 42. He spoke in the voice of a man who nothing extenuated nor set down aught in malice. We finally compromised the matter at two shillings for each incision and sealed the bargain with more whisky. We spoke to J. Cæsar about it afterwards, and explained that half-sovereigns did not grow in the hedgerows. He tried to explain the matter, and evidently regretted deeply that the Almighty had not endowed him with speech.

We share this regret. There must be thoughts within the cells of J. Cæsar's brain well worth the hearing—better worth perhaps than those running out on to this suffering paper. When he takes his

morning walk in Wisdom Court, in addition to ozone and smuts, he takes in all that is worth taking in. His old head waggles gravely from side to side while he meditates over what he sees, wonders over the suchness of things ; and all the while he never tries to alter them. That, among other lessons, have we learnt from J. Cæsar. The acute reader may have noticed that we comment but never put forth suggestions. We do not propose to ameliorate things—we merely notice that they are so ; and this we have learnt from J. Cæsar. It is one of the secrets of happiness.

Nevertheless, ours is a dog of action. His is one of those minds which are content to be quiescent while possessing the capacity of action. When for instance the kettle boiled over into our boots on the hearthrug, did J. Cæsar lose his head as a woman would have done ? He came gravely into the bedroom of one of us, and stood saying as plainly as canine physiognomy could :

“It’s about time you came into the other room. The kettle is raising Hail, Columbia.”

And while the damage was being repaired he sniffed gravely at the steaming boots, looking into them with a pessimistic eye that said :

"Here's a pretty cup of tea."

At first Mrs. Robbem made a stand against J. Cæsar, but she soon found that he was of different metal to his masters. Us she rules with a rod of iron, but she bows before the dog. He has a way of looking at her, which somehow places a number of rungs of the social ladder between them. He is a gentleman—a self-respecting dignified gentleman. We have never seen him make a *faux pas*. There was no doubt good reason for the slaying of the two cats, the jackdaw, and the pampered pet of the Q.C.'s lady, could Cæsar include them in his commentaries. As for the affair at the back door, we would take Cæsar's word against the affidavit of B 42 any day in the week. When we are away Cæsar insists on dining in the dining-room on a dinner napkin in the usual way.

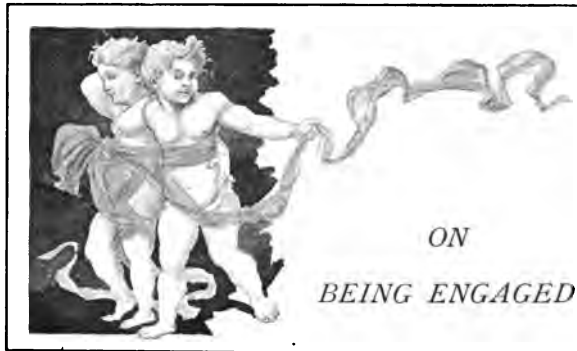
"None of your scrappy meals on the mat for me," Mrs. Robbem avers that he explained to her. He sleeps in a basket on the hearthrug, and his mattress is composed of pine shavings and nothing else. When the shavings get a little stale and flat he sniffs critically at them before retiring to rest, looking back over his shoulder the while, with an air that says :

"I dont want to make myself disagreeable, but this bed is not clean."

He accompanies us down to the shop of a small carpenter in Milton Lane to buy fresh shavings, and shops with more dignity and a better feeling than many human beings.

Next to each other, there is no doubt that we both love Cæsar best. Next to man, the dog is man's best friend. He has the power of drawing a greater individual affection than any of the animals. Some men love horses, some women love cats—in the plural. One can love a dog in the singular. And the strange significant part of it is that he wins that love without speaking. There is, if you come to think of it, a vast field for thought in the love of a man for a dog. The dog does nothing for it. He requires a licence, biscuits regularly, and water always. He sometimes has need of Keating's Powder. He does no work, and he must be taken for walks. He usually assumes the right to the best chair. If he is contraried, he bites. If he feels unwell in the night, he has no hesitation in mentioning the fact and arousing the house. And yet we love him. He usually renders us no service. He

merely accepts all we give him, and in return he offers nothing but a base unfruitful love which is one of the best things on earth ; for he gives it regardless of personal appearance, irrespective of wealth, poverty, temper, talents and position. The only thing is—and perhaps that is the fault of human nature—the only thing is, that we do not remember a dead dog so long as we remember dead friends. We rarely long for the touch of a vanished paw and the sound of a bark that is still.



*"Love's of itself too sweet ; the best of all
Is when love's honey has a dash of gall."*

SOME cynical persons declare that the beauty and sentiment which once surrounded an engagement like a halo are to be found no more. But this we altogether decline to believe. It may, indeed, be true that an engagement is no longer associated with moonlight, lockets, locks of hair and missives concealed in gnarled oaks. (The oaks were always gnarled.)

An unfortunate attachment seldom now terminates in suicide or consumption. And yet, can anything in the past ages of romance vie in self-sacrificing

loveliness with a beautiful instance which has come under our own experience?

A very charming young lady has pledged herself to marry a most terrible City creature who had made thousands and thousands out of oil or tallow, or some other unpleasant business like that—entirely for the sake of the Family. No one could have supposed for a moment that any enjoyment could possibly accrue to *her* from money made in such a shockingly vulgar way by such a shockingly vulgar person—even supposing she had had time to spare one thought for herself, which of course she had not. They were all taken up by the Family. She explained to quite twenty-three or four of her dearest friends that it was no good pretending to *Them* that she did anything except simply detest the Tallow-man. But this of course was the greatest secret as Appearances *must* be kept up. It has even been said, that she hinted in the most delicate possible way, that she—had been—well, attached—to Someone Else. But there was her duty. There was the Family. She could not let poor Papa starve. (He was at that moment starving uncommonly comfortably on one of the best grouse-

moors in Scotland.) And there were the Girls. It was, she said, positively cruel to ask any girl to dress herself (as they would have had to do) upon a hundred a year, unless she was a South Sea Islander, when perhaps it could be managed. And unless they (the Girls, not the South Sea Islanders) could be "brought out" in South Kensington, she herself thought it positively wicked to bring them out at all.

"Why, they might marry anybody," she said, as a climax, "or *nobody*." To save the Family therefore from so much unmitigated wretchedness, she pledged herself almost cheerfully to marry the Tallow-man's millions. We trust she may be rewarded. It is impossible of course that *she* should derive anything like pleasure from her town-house and her country-house, her yacht, her parties, and her unlimited dress-allowance. But they will at least gratify the Family. And she will bear them as bravely as the can for the sake of Papa and the Girls.

We have also met the young lady who is engaged for the sake of the Trousseau. She may even be said to be engaged to the Trousseau—the future husband being of so very little account. Indeed,

if it were no longer the fashion to have a trousseau, there would no longer be any engagement either. The swain is quite crushed and hidden under an immense heap of dressmakers, milliners, new hats, and what we believe are called "*Confections de Paris*." The Trousseau Girl does not trouble herself to look for him beneath the heap, and is perfectly incapable of seeing over it—into matrimony. She is generally quite frank and transparent. Her relations say it is so nice and fresh and young of her to take so much interest in her clothes. If she betrays a little too plainly that it is the only interest she *does* take, her friends assure each other that, after all, it is "very natural." Perhaps it is. Very likely it is only our stupid conceit and jealousy which makes us expect that we should be put before a three-guinea hat, or that we should be esteemed more highly than a *tulle moiré antique*. Eve in Paradise was probably the only woman who esteemed her Adam above her garments—and that was because Paris fashions had not yet been introduced.

It is quite beautiful to note the simple trust a number of young gentlemen are in the habit of reposing in Providence. They become engaged to perfectly

charming (and perfectly penniless, young ladies to whom they are able to offer boundless affection, and an annual income, which is unlikely ever to exceed £200, and extremely likely never to attain to half that amount. Yet such persons bill and coo with the wealthiest—and expect something to turn up. Nothing ever does. Unless it be the Rich Girl—virtuous but not lovely.

Other persons are drawn into engagements by a dimly lit conservatory, a syren, and a memory of champagne. By the next morning they are generally repented of; but by the next week, by the exercise of a little ingenuity and an elastic conscience, they may be broken off—by the girl. To enter into an engagement which you afterwards find you do not want to keep, may happen to any one. To enter into an engagement and allow the onus of breaking it off to rest with yourself, only happens to fools.

We have met a young lady who made such a splendid capital out of a broken engagement that we cannot refrain from giving her example for public imitation. She was once engaged for about six months to a certain Jack. At the end of the six months, Jack found his constitution really would not stand the strain any

longer, so he broke the engagement off. We were not ourselves surprised at this. What we marvelled at was how it had ever come on. Rude persons had named the young lady Up and At You. And though we regret the opprobrium of the title, we must say it suited her very well indeed. From this broken engagement was shed a soft light of tender sentiment and romance, which may be said to have glorified Up and At You for all time. If her affections had not been so cruelly blighted at the outset of her young life, her friends would certainly not have borne so patiently as they did with her short temper and her impolite manners. If the faithless Jack had not wounded her tender heart it is probable that when she was positively rude, people would have been positively rude back again. As it was they only said, "Poor dear thing! it is all that wretched Jack. He has perfectly embittered her life." Her whilom-engagement was in fact to her more than the spar is to the drowning sailor. She clung to it convulsively, and when any one attempted to treat her as other people are treated, she Upped and At Them with it. Many persons, we believe, have been sentimentally disappointed. Some, we know from experience, have made absolutely no use of their

blighted affections. They are as pleasant and cheerful as if they had had no romance and were merely ordinary persons. They can scarcely be too much condemned. They have missed splendid opportunities. They should have seen Up and At You. She would have taught them something. A perpetual right to the best armchair, the juiciest kidney at breakfast, and the largest share of the fire ; a constant immunity from being polite, good-tempered, or unselfish, and a perpetual licence to tell your friends what you think of them, to contradict, and set them right, are privileges cheaply purchased by a broken engagement in one's youth.

It will be observed that we have chiefly spoken, in the above article, of the fair sex. That is our modesty. We are aware that during an engagement the aspiring swain is merely an encumbrance. He is almost as much in the way as on the wedding-day itself. He is not the least interesting. He does not even have a trousseau. He will not so much as change his name. His opinion could not, of course, possibly be taken upon the subject of the house-linen. And though he naturally pays for the furniture of the house, all the responsibility and trouble of choosing it are taken off

his shoulders by self-sacrificing mamas or aunts. Still, he cannot pretend he is neglected. Angelina's people give dinner-parties in his honour, and her relations come and look him up and down. Angelina herself is so sweet, she tears herself away from the wedding presents and the dressmakers every now and then, just to give him a little peck on his cheek, and to tell him the Arbuthnot-Joneses have sent her a diamond bracelet, and him the dearest little papier-maché collar-stud box in the world. Certainly he would be an ungrateful beast if he were not happy.



ON LETTERS

*"A cœur blessé—l'ombre
et le silence."*

LONG years ago we actually wrote a letter to each other. Strange to say we have preserved these communications in a packet already referred to, and now set them down for what they are worth :

MY DEAR M.,—Your letter, vaguely dated Headquarters, reached me yesterday. I am glad to hear that you keep free from fever as from other ills to which flesh is heir. Sent off yesterday three dozen champagne and six small bottles tincture of quinine as

desired. Keep up your constitution, and duck very low when the music begins and you hear the bullets whistle.

The rumour you heard, old chap, had some truth in it, though I cannot make out how it floated through to you. I have been hard hit, and I wish you were here, because you are a cynical beast, and that is what I require just now, though I cannot see that anything could really make any difference.

Do you remember when I was knocked silly against the goal-post (Wackemton 1st *versus* Grange) and you and Barker Major lugged me indoors? That is how I feel now : I want lugging indoors. I want somebody to tell me there is nothing the matter with me—no bones broken and no harm down. I want somebody to laugh at me and tell me not to be a fool ; to tell me that I got the touch-down all the same, and that old Footy Ongley had kicked the goal.

It would not be true, however, if you did tell me that, because I did not get the touch-down. I was crumpled up outside the goal-posts.

It was one of those confounded house-parties down at old Mother Montarrow's in Sussex. Hear me swear ! hear me curse with a long deep curse all

country-houses, all house-parties ! Briefless (or as good as briefless) ones have no business there.

I went down with a broad smile and all my clean shirts in your Gladstone bag. By the way, I borrowed your gold sleeve-links. I had a lot of good stories ready, and a host of little jokes, most of them yours, my boy ! In twelve hours I was out of my depth. I was a wanderer in a strange land. I wanted to go back to Wisdom Court, but I wanted still more to stay where I was.

The funny part of it was that there seemed to be no question about it. I knew it as soon as ever I saw her, before I had been introduced. In two days she knew it, at least I told her then, but she said that she knew it before Lady Montarrow had got my name out.

And now, old man, I want you to understand what we both understood from the very first : namely, that there is no way out of it, no possible hope. We are not a story-book (there is no romance about us at all), and therefore no aged aunt will die at the right moment. Besides, if any of them did, they have nothing but unseasonable advice and an executorship to leave behind them.

By God! M—, she *was* plucky! Despite your record, you are an abject coward beside that little girl. As for me, I simply was nowhere. She it was who said quite quietly that it was hopeless, that neither of us must ever think of it as otherwise. She it was who put the matter so plainly that I knew I was a fool to ever think of hoping. And I knew that she felt it quite as strongly as I did, perhaps more so, for she told me.

Yet through it all, through that desperate week, she kept going, as plucky and as merry as could be, without *ever* getting reckless.

What I liked about her was her frankness. She told me whatever she thought, and it made me feel a brute, for her thoughts were better things than mine.

She told me that there was only one man in the world for her, and that it always would be so. She told me that she was engaged to be married to her cousin—she spoke well of him, rich and titled—and that she would be his wife within a year. It was the wish of his father and her father. It was fate; she could do nothing. She was an “honourable,” and if ever the title was deserved she deserved it. Her simple creed was—*Noblesse oblige*. She knew she

could never have married me, and so did I. I did not even ask her to. Her father is a penniless peer, her only brother a scoundrel. An old story, but when it comes to be your own it seems quite new.

I will not describe her personal appearance, because ours is not a case like that at all. Appearances are absolutely of no consequence. It would have been all the same for me had she been . . . different from what she is.

I have not seen her now for three months, and shall probably not see her again. We arranged that it should be so, and it will not be difficult to avoid each other, for we only could meet at the Mont-arrows'. When she is married she will be in quite a different circle. We were quite desperately matter-of-fact and calm over it all, and I know now that women are pluckier in some things than men.

I write and tell you this, old chap, because it seems that the campaign will not be long. You will probably be home again in Wisdom Court before the winter, and I want you to know that there is now one thing which we cannot talk about, that there is a skeleton in my cupboard beside my tobacco-jar and my pipes, and that therefore you must leave the door

closed. It may be that you will see no difference ; I hope you won't, because I promised that there *should* be no difference ; I promised to cultivate a grin until it grew into a natural smile. I promised to be happy, it was all I could do. But I know that in myself I am quite a different man. In a way I *am* happier, but I cannot explain how.

Take care of yourself, old man, and if there is anything I can do for you let me know. When you come home do not expect to find a woebegone and tragic youth. We—she and I—agreed that there should be none of that.—Yours ever, T.

DEAR T.,—As we are virtually cut off from the world here, your letter took some time to get through. They are going to make a big sortie to-morrow—to cut their way through to the main column. I shall, of course, trot meekly after.

A coloured brother-in-arms has undertaken to sneak through the enemy's lines on the flat of his chest with this and other momentous despatches—so I take the opportunity.

I read your letter, my boy, three times. First time, I laughed ; second time, I scratched my head ; third

time, I felt quite grave and not a bit hungry. It may be mentioned, in passing, that we have been hungry more or less all the time since last Tuesday, when most things gave out; everything, in fact, worth eating. Under these circumstances, you will realise that my emotion must have been considerable, seeing that it took away my appetite. But the appetite came back again—and so will yours.

I confess I do not like the tone of your letter. It is so confoundedly circumstantial, and there is no poetry, no romance, no high-falutin' in it. That is what I do not like; I should have preferred you to high-falute. You do not mention the moon, I observe; and you do not tell me that your life is blighted. You fail to inform me that you look down the long vista of hopeless years that lies before you and wonder how you are going to get through them all.

I wish you had done some of these things, because they are symptoms, and without symptoms I cannot make a diagnosis.

Other men have had your complaint, and some of them seem all the better for having passed through it. This I mention for your comfort. All of them had symptoms—one or other of those described above—all

of their lives were blighted, as far as I remember. They generally looked down the vista. Most of them abused the girl, which is an excellent symptom. I wish you had it—I wish to goodness you would abuse that girl. Not that she deserves it—oh, dear no! But merely because it is generally done. It would not do her any harm, and the act of abusing would relieve the cerebral pressure. It would bring you on and the cure might come sooner. For the cure *will* come—you need never fear for that. It always does. It seems incurable at first, this malady, and then the patient pulls up suddenly.

I have come to the conclusion that there is only one thing in life which cannot be cured—to which one cannot get accustomed—and that is Death.

You will get accustomed to living your life right through with a want in it. We all have to do that. My life has a want in it, although I daresay you have never suspected such a thing. Some day, perhaps, I will tell you what it is. I have got accustomed to it now, and you will get accustomed to yours.

You will get accustomed to wanting her, and the habit will come to be a part of your life. You will be all the better for it: what they call a better man.

Also, she will benefit by it; for you will think much better of her right up to the end than you would if you got her. Mind I do not mean to insinuate anything against her personally. That would be a fatal course. You would like me to do so, I know, because then you could abuse me. After all, if you feel like this, old boy, it is perhaps better that you should write and do it. It will do me no harm—a little abuse is not of much account when one is in the heart of an unknown country, surrounded by an unknown number of enemies—and it would prevent the blood from flying to your talented head. I will even give you something to abuse me for, if you like.

She will get over it, too. She will probably make a better cure than you. You see she will have carriages and horses and servants, which items go a long way towards making misery a pleasant thing.

Gilded misery is one of the best lives that are to be lived here below. For the misery cannot be always present, and the gilt is. It is perpetually upon the surface, and the superficial is the most important part of life.

You need not, for a moment, trouble yourself about *her* happiness. (I bet you think more of it than you

do of your own—the other men did.) She will be all right when she is married to her titled cousin—why dont you abuse the brute?—and has her lady's-maid, a perpetual fire in her bedroom, and other trifling comforts which are not to be purchased by all the wisdom in Wisdom Court.

In the meantime, *work!* Work, so to speak, like the devil; and in your leisure moments busy yourself with something. Smoke as much as you like; read Thackeray, Mark Twain, and the Book of Ecclesiastes. Cultivate greediness. Do, for goodness' sake, try to take more interest in what you eat. (Hang it, I *am* hungry!) Dine at the club, and if Jawler comes to the same table, do not snub him. Let him talk; it will rile you and do you good. Always go in for the Club-dinner, and pretend to take a huge interest in the menu. Talk about the soup and the entrées; pick the wine-list to pieces, and slang the waiter. Poor old Shuffles! he will wonder what has come to him! Accept all the dinners we used to refuse. In time you will find that you take quite an interest in those component parts of human life which are intended for our inward comfort. Cultivate that taste; for these things make glad the countenance of man.

Above all, don't run away from it! For it is yourself, and if you run, you will take that with you. Stick to the ship! Stick to Wisdom Court and your life there. Do not make a break, for it is those breaks that never can be mended.

If we get through to-morrow, the evacuation will begin at once, and I may be home at any time. If we don't get through priez pour moi."—
Yours ever, M.



"Et ne dammons personne."

WE apologise for the above title. There is absolutely no offence intended. It is not our purpose to include theological subjects among those treated of in these papers. Some day, perhaps, we shall give to the world a vast work wholly dedicated to the subject. Perhaps it will be found among our papers by the reverent hand who will let in the glad sunlight upon the dusty study where two savants lie dead among their books, surrounded by their works. It is our intention to die in this picturesque way. But we hope that the event may not come yet. Not because we fear Death. Avaunt! Have we not faced the

British Public? We hope for the delay because we have not yet drawn out the plan of the masterpiece that is always found among a great writer's papers.

Neither is it our intention to treat of the edifice notified above. Architects are narrow-minded persons and would probably take our suggestions in bad part. No! We only wish to mention that in our time we have been to church—as often perhaps as any man of our build and habit. Moreover, we would go more often still if it were not for the company. There are many people in church who will not leave us in peace. They distract our attention. To be thoroughly devout we require a church to ourselves—not a cathedral, but merely a fair-sized parish church. Whenever we go to church now we come away with a number of unanswered questions in our mind. We want to know what a number of our fellow-worshippers think that they are doing. So many of them—more especially sober-clad ladies of an uncertain age—have strange ways with them which may be pious, but we do not quite see why they should. We are not joking. We are quite serious when we say that a form of religion which saps up all sense of the ridiculous and is calculated to offend the public

eye or else bring a twinkle to that orb is a mistaken form.

There are some people whose method of worship is too ornate for plaining men like ourselves; and one hyper-externally devout woman may disturb the devotion of two pewsful of good churchgoers.

Every one knows the Pious Lady of High Church proclivities who is too spiritual even to wear gloves. She hastens into church with the rapid walk peculiar to the ethereally occupied. With a fasting expression of countenance, she takes any pew, drops therein flat upon her knees without having previously sat down or looked round just to see who is not there, and what the people who are there have got on. We suppose that any one of at all a carnal mind must feel aggravated by the fact, that, however long the service, it is never quite long enough for her, and when the lighter-minded are flocking joyfully down the aisles to the Church Parade the Pious Lady is always left supplicating alone. Sometimes she has to be asked to go by the vergers. We can picture to ourselves the unparalleled sense of righteousness which must thrill through a person who has to be requested to leave off by a vergers.

Then there are the ladies who may be said to take a carnal interest in the spiritual. They may be seen almost smacking their lips over a really luscious service. They rush to Matins, Tierce, and Compline, Intercessions for the Afghans, and Quiet Days for the Devout, with untiring energy. "We have had a most *delicious* service," you hear them saying—as if it had been a pudding—"so life-giving"—as if it had been a bottle of champagne. Directly they get into church they pull off their gloves with an air that means business, settle their skirts, Prayer Book and smelling bottle, and look round with an expression which says, "*Now*, I am going to enjoy myself." If they have missed a response while they are wondering how someone else *can* miss such a breezy, invigorating service, they prefer to repeat it five minutes after the rest of the congregation rather than lose it altogether. They sing the hymns with such an Onward-Christian-Soldier-like vigour, that they are cordially disliked for pews round. It is not too much to say that their conversation is so immensely churchy when at home that their relations are driven in bodies to free-thinking and dissent.

In every church is to be seen the sad rake (of about

fifteen) endeavouring his very best to look as if he had never been in any place of worship before. He knows, and he knows that the rest of the congregation know, that he has been brought there twice every Sunday since he could walk, and that his unrelenting churchwarden of a papa would stop his pocket-money if he stayed away. So the only thing he can do is to assume a covert coat and an air of reckless dissipation, not use a Prayer Book, and wink a horribly irreligious and free-thinking wink at some sad dog of a friend in a like position with himself.

Then there is the smug man on the outlook for Romanism. We have always marvelled why he doesn't go and be—happy at that abnormally Low Church which his sleek and oily soul loveth. But he prefers to attend our ornate worship and sniff about for the Pope in our Gregorian chants, our ascetic clergy, and our sweet little confessional boxes. It is always a satisfaction to us to see his temper mounting apopletically to his countenance when a Latin monotone is interpolated just where one would least expect it, and we quite rejoice (on his account) in the devout female who perpetually curtseys several feet into the ground immediately in front of him.

Further, we object to the fainting lady, a person who seems to come to the church for the sake of the notoriety which accrues to her from being carried out in that peculiar sort of swoon which kicks and gasps.

We have no reason for thinking that we are not as rightminded as any one we know, but we confess that the sight of the unwholesome young man of ultra-Ritualistic proclivities not merely puts a stop to our devotions, but tempts us almost past resistance to take the youth outside and kick him. Is it his complexion that has spoilt his religion, or his religion that has spoilt his complexion? Is it impossible to combine daily services and a straight back? Is there any reason that an exalted degree of piety should be accompanied by limp knees and a head which looks as if it were insecurely hitched on? We ask for information. We want to know.

Finally, we wish every one to understand that it is not religion we laugh at—Heaven forbid! (We mention this expressly because Christianity is considered by some to have been already half demolished by one or two lady-like novels, and who knows but

that a smile from US might not entirely raze it to the ground ?)

It is not religion then at which we smile this singularly effective smile, but at the absurdities by which religion is profaned.



ON
COURAGE

"Only an honest man doing his duty."

WE regret to say that there has been a slight rupture in an otherwise harmonious partnership. The question was, which of us is the fitter man to write about Courage. Very few men like to admit inferiority in the matter of personal bravery. They will confess

without hesitation that they cannot play the violin, that they have forgotten their Sanscrit, that they are unable to smoke three cigars, one done another come on. But wild horses will not extract from the ordinary man that he is a coward.

A schoolfellow of ours, a Wackemtonian, was in the habit of making this confession. He used often to tell us that he was in a ghastly funk on such and such an occasion. Fellows laughed at him, at his big hands and clumsy feet, his red hair and his Irish tongue. But some of us were sceptical in our inmost hearts when he told us that he was in a funk, he concealed the fact at the time so remarkably well. He did strange things—things which would have been considered desperately plucky in another boy, but because *he* did them he was laughed at. He could not swim when he first came, but he threw himself in at the ten-foot end of the bath and was rescued, more or less dead, repeatedly, until he learnt. He was the first of the old Wackemtonians of our time "to leave." They buried him at the other end of the Khyber, and the Chief laid his own V.C. on the coffin. We are proud of him still, although he told a fellow officer just before the end that he was in a "ghastly funk" when

he saw the skirmishers running in. He is the only man we have ever known who confessed to cowardice.

Courage is a singular thing. It cannot be called a gift, because it may be acquired. It is intensely contagious, more so than fear. Of course some men are born with it or appear to be, while others, a small minority, never acquire it. The worst feature is that the acquired article is apt to be conditional. It is the courage of Mr. Thomas Atkins, private soldier, which requires support and considerable shouting. It is the courage that melts in the contagion of panic.

Again there is the courage of responsibility—the cool steady pluck of the gentleman who stands beside Thomas Atkins with a sword and tries to make him put his rifle to his shoulder before pulling the trigger. That, as the French say, is already something better.

But best of all is the “one man” courage,—the single-handed, the self-reliant. This is the species most frequently met in the civilized world. We can see it from our chamber windows in the peaceful Court. It wears regulation boots, blue trousers, a helmet, a baton, and a pair of white cotton gloves to keep its hands warm. At present it is talking to a cook at the area gate, but when duty calls it will go straight for a

pair of runaway horses or climb unhesitatingly on to a roof to capture three desperate burglars. It will march into the midst of an East-end mob and collar a ringleader. Its daily walk is amidst the scum of the earth, the object of hatred and distrust ; of which hatred and distrust it is perfectly well aware. It is technically known as P.C. B 42. We should like to shake B 42 by the hand ; but we are nervous. In a higher grade of life this courage produces explorers, mountaineers, big game hunters and soldiers of fortune.

Lastly, and least, comes the evanescent courage which is begotten of excitement. It is as likely to prompt its possessor to a foolish action as to a wise, whereas a cooler man might accomplish more without risking his life so much. Under its influence men break ranks and rush out to meet the enemy, at the same time breaking the square and risking the lives of their comrades.

But all this is active courage—courage militant. Men who are aware of their own failing in this, frequent the paths of peace. In those paths, however, there are dangers. It is in the matters of every-day life that we show ourselves to be such abject cowards. What we lack is carpet courage.

Thus in almost every family there is to be found a tyrant; one who not only rules the roast, but also appropriates the entire undercut. Sometimes it is an only son—sometimes one of a number of sisters—in some lamentable cases the father—occasionally the mother. To this tyrant all the others bow the head of servility. No one has the moral courage to undertake the conduct of one side of a row, and it would probably be quite a small row without any casualties among the china. Hard words, we know, break no hearts. Once a tyrant is down, he never rises again. Lacking the positive, these victims sometimes possess a spurious negative courage. They endure without complaint, but also without effort to ameliorate matters. It is only when there is no possible amelioration that endurance is true courage. To be the genuine article we mean, of course, that it be accompanied by a respectable show of cheerfulness—that one's sorrows be kept off the housetops, and that the sympathy of one's neighbours be not drawn upon to exhaustion.

As existence in this vale is more or less a matter of endurance from first to last, this species of courage is more important in the long run than any other. We

are of opinion that women possess it in a higher degree than men. We each have experience of one man in the smaller drawbacks of daily existence, and we say without hesitation that some of our sex cannot endure at all. They are impatient and unreasonable. If one puts on another's only pair of winter socks by mistake on a cold morning, will the owner of the socks put up with a little discomfort? Will he endure the slight drawback of summer socks for the sake of his friend? Not he. It does not matter whether the offender's boots be laced up or not.

If one man's soul hankers after music which his fingers cannot satisfactorily accomplish on, say, the violin, will the other endure the long hours of endeavour with a smiling countenance? Not he. He will say: "Something that fiddle! Put it away, or I shall light my old meerschaum and make you ill."

That women can endure we know. Because we each knew a woman once, and sometimes now, with our feet on the fender, we look back through the tobacco-smoke and see a fiend of a boy with no thought beyond himself; with a perfect genius for noise and breakage, and ignorant of the existence of nerves. We do not talk when these thoughts come

to us, and we consume a good deal of tobacco. But we are quite convinced that women possess that greatest courage of all—the power of endurance.

We claim, however, one species for ourselves. We possess the courage of our own opinions—severally and individually. The man in the rooms below knows this too, for he sometimes comes up and protests in terms which cannot be set down here.

We hate other people who have the courage of their own opinions, because they are absurdly proud of it, and the opinion is usually valueless. They throw it in your face, and when the row is over they apologise with mock humility, holding up their possession as sufficient excuse, as if it were an hereditary evil or a squint.



ON HONOUR
AND GLORY

"Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye."

WE have been making researches of a deep universal interest. It has been our modest endeavour to find out the person responsible for the coupling of the two words at the head of this treatise. These very dissimilar words were connected in a certain illegitimate brotherhood for purposes of profane conversation long before the phrase formed by them was adopted into the Liturgy. It has been our endeavour to trace this secular connection of the words to its

distant source. We wanted to find out who first placed honour and glory together in application to human affairs.

In an early stage of our researches we found ourselves compelled to pause—to step aside and master a science *en passant*. We paused therefore: we purged our intellects of all knowledge likely to prove a stumblingblock—we deadened all sense of reason; and like children with a clean slate (not a loose tile) we sat down to study the Doctrine of Evolution.

Through a long winter we read; through a necessarily brief summer, for it was an English one, we meditated; and in the late autumn, as in due season, we gathered in to harvest. It was a rich harvest. We had made one of the discoveries of the age. It did not come to us in a flash—it dawned slowly, very slowly, like a winter's day in Wisdom Court: and we knew that there could be no mistake about it.

We had traced back to her source that gifted female the Lady-Novelist. In the very earliest records of the world we found that tales were told by a woman. From that discovery we stepped upward into space as from the summit of a pyramid of human evidence. From the moment that our earthy foot

left that step we soared far beyond Ages into the reign of Periods. We left behind us the dull plains of Fact and roamed in the sunny land of Fancy. Here we found at once that every man's opinion was as good as his neighbours'. Here there was absolutely no evidence for or against, and therefore a man had merely to make a bold statement and stick to it. No one could bring evidence to prove that he was a fool or a liar. This, we take it, is the clover-land of the Doctrine of Evolution. And here we found an Atom : an Atom of Intellect. It was whirling about with a buzzing noise—not unlike the sound that filters through the drawing-room door before the gentlemen have joined the ladies. The Atom whirled on through a Period or so, but neither heat nor cold nor any other change of atmosphere could silence the buzzing. It gathered a little information here and there, and the buzzing grew louder as it has continued to do ever since. The Atom grew and grew, until finally its original substance was coated over with a conglomeration of half-assimilated facts. Then the inner substance died or turned to stone. Still the buzzing continued, and new facts attached themselves to the outer crust of this unstable body. A few more

Ages accumulated into a Period, and there was a development—a Thing. That Thing, we say, is responsible for the coupling of the two words ‘Honour and Glory’ as applicable to human affairs. And from that thing the Lady Novelist has evolved herself. Hence the questionable wisdom of the combination which we determined to investigate.

We will now prove that Honour has absolutely nothing to do with Glory. But we would first endeavour to impress upon that portion of the British public which is addicted to airing its views, gratis, in the columns of the daily papers, that no notice will be taken of dissentient arguments. Our views are final, and it is in face of that fact that we have refrained from sending this article to a scientific Review. If, in a word, any gentlemen living, say, in Camberwell or Hackney (from which rural retreats so many letters seem to hurl themselves into the columns of our leading daily papers), if, we say, any person whose address is S.E. or N. thinks that he is going to get a rise out of us, he is mistaken.

We have tasted of Glory. We have cooled our noses in the inebriating cup since our early youth. From the very first we were full of promise. Our

parents gloried in us, but did we find that our school-fellows honoured us for this promise? Not much. In due time the great promise produced some small performances—very small. We took Honours, but the commodity in the singular was not accorded us. Our most intimate friends shrugged their shoulders and said that it was a fluke. Those gentlemen whose names figured beneath ours in the list had theories concerning our learning, and aired them; the scholars credited with a greater number of marks merely ignored us.

Since that time some of our competitors have figured in the more popular columns of the journals; but we have never been able to detect the shadowy form of Honour hovering on the footsteps of Glory. One of our comrades, for instance, sought that evanescent kind of Glory which is supposed to bloom in the neighbourhood of the cannon's mouth, and found it. He now begins his name with many double-barrelled titles and ends it up with a number of cabalistic capitals: he has also forgotten us. But those who know anything about his trade say that he is no soldier.

Another of our friends has "pierced," as the

French say ; not however in the same way, although the glory of the cannon's mouth is also his. He is a popular preacher, and his black-coated brethren in arms invariably raise their eyebrows at the mention of his name. They likewise express a Christian desire that he would devote a little more time to the study of theology.

In happier times, Honour might have lived in harmony with Glory, but such a cohabitation is now impossible. These are essentially journalistic times, and it is in the columns of the papers that true Glory lives. It takes this form :—

"Mrs. Robinson-Smith's second small dance has been postponed owing to the unfortunate illness of Miss Geraldine Albertina Gwendoline Maud Robinson-Smith."

or :—

"Mrs. Tomaso Jones's soirée musicale of Thursday night may be reckoned among the successes of the season. Mrs. Tomaso Jones was exquisitely gowned in a silver-grey poulte de soie."

or :—

Mr. and Mrs. Smythe of London have left town for the Smithy, their charming pied-à-terre in Hertfordshire."

This is Glory, but after careful consideration we must admit that we fail to see where the Honour of it comes in. We do not for instance think any more highly of Mrs. Robinson-Smith because she gives two or possibly more small dances in the season ; and we cannot see of what interest the postponement of such an important event may be to the quarter of a million readers of a morning paper. Of course we are very sorry for Geraldine Albertina Gwendoline Maud, and only hope that she has not so many diseases as Christian names.

As for Mrs. Tomaso Jones's exquisite gown of silver-grey poul de soie we are perfectly indifferent to it. We do not admire well-dressed middle-aged ladies nearly so much as badly dressed girls, and if there is one form of entertainment which we consider dangerous to our moral characters it is a soirée musicale.

We are very glad the Smythes have left London, but we cannot pretend to say that we ever knew them to be there. Amidst the throng of other people we had completely overlooked them. As far as we are concerned they are at perfect liberty to go to the Smithy, or anywhere else they may think fit; they may also stay there.

We may mention that we once longed for journalistic glory ourselves. In a small drinking den in the neighbourhood of Newcastle Street, Strand, we were personally introduced to the gentleman who supplied the "fashionable intelligence" to many leading newspapers. That settled us.



*THE
LAST WORD*

To you, grave men, and maidens pensive,
Who hold that only books extensive
Can wisdom teach :

Bear yet with us a little while.

To all who judge mirth reprehensive,
Holding that men talk only sense if
They rant and preach :

There may be wisdom in a smile.

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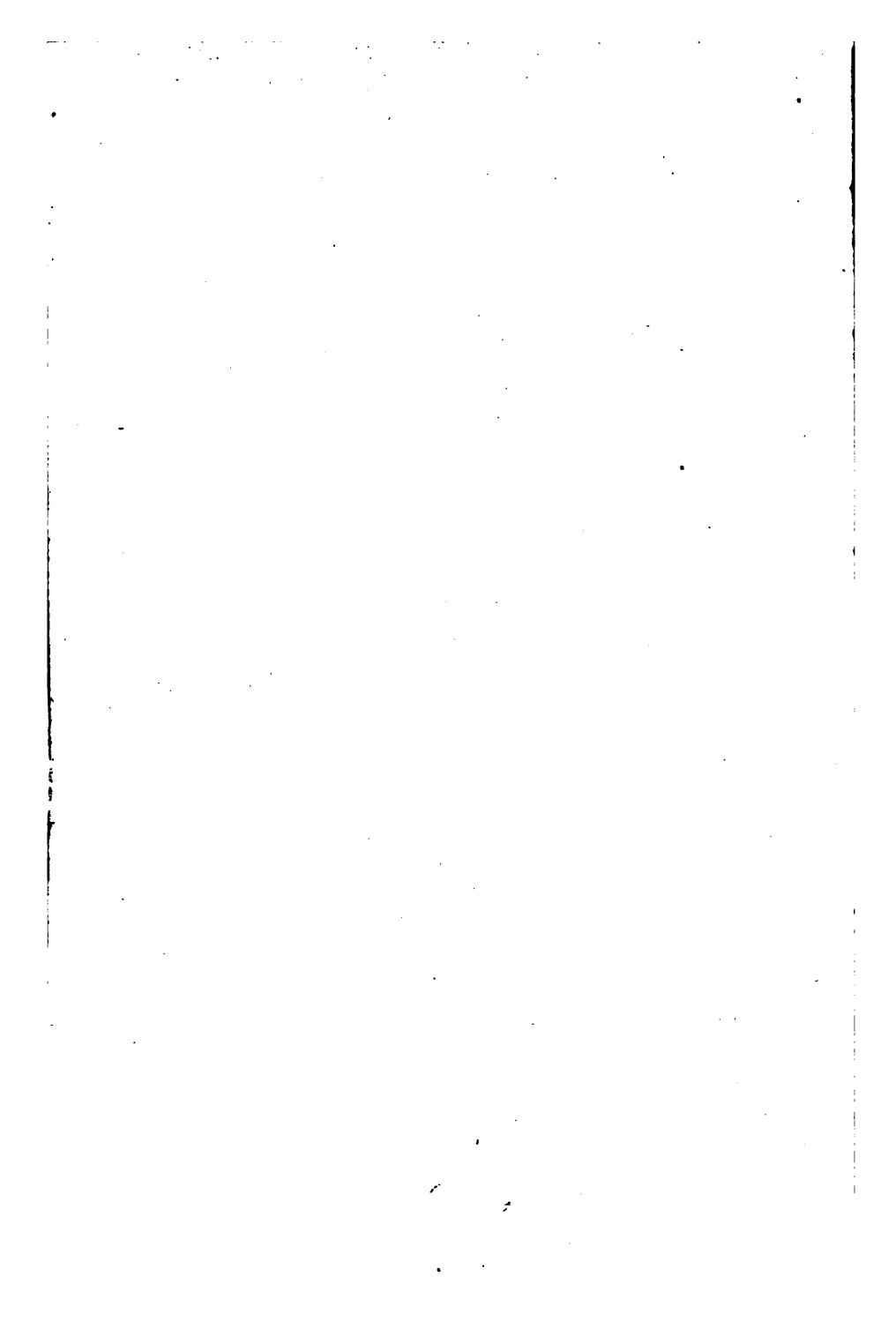
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